

contents showed me that they were of the deepest interest as relating to the important events of the Crimean War, and to the first seven years of Gordon's service in the Army. I at once went to Sir Henry Gordon, who honoured me with his friendship and confidence in no less a degree than his distinguished and ever-lamented brother, and begged of him permission to publish them. He at once gave his consent, which was ratified by the late Miss Augusta Gordon, the hero's favourite sister. The letters appeared in July 1884, under the title of "General Gordon's Letters from the Crimea, the Danube, and Armenia." In the proper place I have told what Kinglake, the historian of the war, thought of them and their author.

In the rush of books that followed the fall of Khartoum, no favourable opportunity for carrying out my original purpose presented itself; and, indeed, I may say that the anonymous biographical work I performed during the course of the year 1885 would have filled a large-sized volume. Moreover, the terrible events of the fall of Khartoum, and the failure of the relieving expedition, were too close at hand to allow of a just view being taken of them, and it was necessary to defer an intention which I never abandoned. It seemed to me that the tenth anniversary of the fall of Khartoum would be an appropriate occasion for the appearance of a Life claiming to give a complete view and final verdict on the remarkable career and character of the man, with whom his own friendly inclination had made me exceptionally well acquainted.

In 1893, therefore, I began to take steps to carry out my project, and to the notification of my intention and the application for assistance in regard to unpublished papers, I received from several of the principal representatives of the Gordon family encouraging replies. But at this time both Sir Henry Gordon and Miss Gordon were dead, and I discovered that the latter had bound her literary executrix, Miss Dunlop, a niece of General Gordon's, by a promise not to divulge the bulk



the First Royal Scots, which a few years before Culloden had fought gallantly at Fontenoy. At Prestonpans David Gordon had the bad fortune to be made prisoner by the forces of Charles Edward, and he found on the victorious side the whole of the Gordon clan, under the command of Sir William Gordon of Park, a younger son of the Earl of Huntly. As he was able to claim kindred with Sir William, David Gordon received better treatment than he might have expected, and in a short time was allowed to go free, either on an exchange of prisoners or more probably on his parole. This incident is specially interesting, because, after making every allowance for the remoteness and vagueness of the old Highland custom of cousinship, it seems to bring Charles Gordon's ancestry into sufficiently close relationship with the main Gordon stem of the Huntlys. After his release David Gordon does not appear to have taken any further part in the war which terminated at Culloden, and he emigrated shortly afterwards to North America, where his death is recorded as having taken place at a comparatively early age at Halifax in the year 1752.

That he came of gentle blood is also proved by the fact that the Duke of Cumberland stood sponsor to his son, who bore the Duke's names of William Augustus. This second Gordon, of the particular branch that has interest for us, also entered the army, and held a commission in several regiments. The most memorable event in his life was his taking part in Wolfe's decisive victory on the heights of Abraham. In 1773 he married a lady, Miss Anna Maria Clarke, whose brother was rector of Hexham in Northumberland, and by her had a family of four daughters and three sons. Of the latter, two died at an early age, and only the youngest, William Henry, born in 1786, survived to manhood. He is especially interesting to us, because he was the father of General Gordon.

Like his father and grandfather, William Henry Gordon chose the profession of a soldier, and entered the Royal Artillery. He saw a great deal of active service, being with his corps in the Peninsula and at Maida, commanding at a later period the Artillery at Corfu and Gibraltar, and attaining before his death in 1865 the rank of Lieutenant-General. He was also connected with the Woolwich Arsenal as Director of the Carriage Department. He has been described as an excellent officer if a somewhat strict disciplinarian, and his firm character of noble integrity lived again in his sons. He married, in 1817, Elizabeth, the daughter of Samuel Enderby, a merchant whaler, one of those west country worthies who carried on the traditions of Elizabeth to the age of Victoria. It would not be possible to present a complete picture of Gordon's mother, and therefore none will be attempted here; but all the

available evidence agrees in describing her as a paragon of women, and as having exercised an exceptional influence over her children. Gordon himself bore the most expressive testimony to her virtues and memory when, long years afterwards, he closed an exordium on the filial affection due to a mother with the outburst—"Oh! how my mother loved me!"

Such in brief were the forebears of the hero who comes next after Nelson in national veneration. To understand him and his career, it must be remembered that he came of a gallant race, with a quick sense of honour, seeing clearly the obvious course of duty, and never hesitating in its fulfilment. These qualities were not peculiar to the man, but inherited from his race, and as they had never been contaminated by the pursuit of wealth in any form, they retained the pristine vigour and fire of a chivalrous and noble age. What was personal and peculiar to Charles Gordon had to be evolved by circumstance and the important occurrences with which it was his lot to be associated throughout his *military and public career, but his soldierly talent and virtue must be* mainly assigned to the traditions and practice of his ancestors.

Of the five sons of General William Henry Gordon and Elizabeth Enderby, Charles George Gordon was the fourth. His eldest brother, Henry William Gordon, born in 1818, had entered the army, first in the 8th Regiment, and transferred in a short time to the 59th, when, at the early age of ten, Charles Gordon was sent off to school at Taunton. The selection of this school in the western country was due to the head-master, Mr Rogers, being a brother of a governess in the Gordon family. Little is known of his early childhood beyond the fact that he had lived, before he was ten, at Corfu, where his father held a command for some years. The Duke of Cambridge has publicly stated that he recollects, when quartered at Corfu at this period, having seen a bright and intelligent boy who occupied the room next to his own, and who subsequently became General Gordon. At Taunton Gordon remained during the greater part of five years, enjoying the advantages of one of the most excellent grammar schools in the West of England, and although he failed to make any special mark as a scholar, I find that, whether on account of his later fame or for some special characteristic that marked him out from the general run of boys, his name is still remembered there by something more than the initials cut upon his desk. If he distinguished himself in anything it was in map-making and drawing, and he exhibited the same qualifications to the end of his career. How careful and excellent the grounding at Taunton school must have been was shown by the fact that, after one year's special coaching at Mr Jefferies' school at Shooter's Hill, Gordon passed direct into the Royal Military

Academy at Woolwich. It is noteworthy that during the whole of the period we are now approaching, he never showed the least tendency to extravagance, and his main anxiety seems to have been to save his parents all possible expense, more especially because they had a large family of daughters. To the end of his life, and in each successive post, Gordon was the slave of duty. At this time, and during the years that follow, down to the Chinese campaigns, his guiding thought was how to save his family the smallest expense on his account, and yet at the same time to hold his head high, and to show himself worthy of his race.

Gordon entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich in 1848, when he had not completed his sixteenth year, and during the four years he remained there he gave some evidence of the qualities that subsequently distinguished him, at the same time that he showed a lightness of disposition which many will think at strange variance with the gravity and even solemnity of his later years. Among his fellow-students he was not distinguished by any special or exclusive devotion to study. He was certainly no bookworm, and he was known rather for his love of sport and boisterous high spirits than for attention to his lessons or for a high place in his class. More than once he was involved in affairs that, if excusable and natural on the score of youth, trenched beyond the borders of discipline, and the stories of life at the Academy that he recited for many years after he left were not exactly in harmony with the popular idea of the ascetic of Mount Carmel.

As the reader treasures up the boyish escapades of Nelson and Clive, so will enduring interest be felt in those outbreaks of the boy Gordon, which made him the terror of his superiors. They are recorded on the unimpeachable evidence of his elder brother, and some of them were even narrated by Gordon himself to his niece nearly thirty years after they happened. Sir Henry is the writer.

"Charles Gordon with a brother (William Augustus) more unruly than himself, finding the time hang heavily upon their hands during the vacation, employed themselves in various ways. Their father's house (at Woolwich) was opposite to that of the Commandant of the Garrison, and was overrun with mice. These were caught, the Commandant's door quietly opened, and the mice were transferred to new quarters. In after life (that is in 1879, when in the Soudan) Charles Gordon wrote to one of his nieces: 'I am glad to hear the race of true Gordons is not extinct. Do you not regret the Arsenal and its delights? You never, any of you, made a proper use of the Arsenal workmen as we did. They used to neglect their work for our orders, and turned out

some splendid squirts—articles that would wet you through in a minute. As for the crossbows we had made, they were grand with screws. One Sunday afternoon twenty-seven panes of glass were broken in the large storehouses. They were found to have been perforated with a small hole (ventilation), and Captain Soady nearly escaped a premature death ; a screw passed his head, and was as if it had been screwed into the wall which it had entered. Servants were kept at the door with continual bell-rings. Your uncle Freddy (a younger brother) was pushed into houses, the bell rung, and the door held to prevent escape. Those were the days of the Arsenal.”

Sir Henry continues :

“But what Charles Gordon considered as his greatest achievement was one that he in after years often alluded to. At this time (1848) the senior class of Cadets, then called the Practical Class, were located in the Royal Arsenal, and in front of their halls of study there were earthworks upon which they were practised from time to time in profiling and other matters. The ins and outs of these works were thoroughly well known to Charles Gordon and his brother, who stole out at night—but we will leave him to tell his own story. He says : ‘I forgot to tell — of how when Colonel John Travers of the Hill Folk (he lived on Shooter’s Hill) was lecturing to the Arsenal Cadets in the evening, a crash was heard, and every one thought every pane of glass was broken ; small shot had been thrown. However, it was a very serious affair, for like the upsetting of a hive, the Cadets came out, and only darkness, speed, and knowledge of the fieldworks thrown up near the lecture-room enabled us to escape. That was before I entered the curriculum. The culprits were known afterwards, and for some time avoided the vicinity of the Cadets. I remember it with horror to this day, for no mercy would have been shown by the Pussies, as the Cadets were called.’”

After he entered the Academy the same love of fun and practical joking characterised him. Sir Henry writes : “After he had been some time at the Academy and earned many good-conduct badges, an occasion arose when it became necessary to restrain the Cadets in leaving the dining-hall, the approach to which was by a narrow staircase. At the top of this staircase stood the senior corporal, with outstretched arms, facing the body of Cadets. This was too much for Charlie Gordon, who, putting his head down, butted with it, and catching the officer in the pit of the stomach not only sent him down the stairs, but through the glass door beyond. The officer jumped up unhurt, and Gordon was placed in confinement and nearly dismissed.

“Upon another occasion, when he was near his commission, a great deal of bullying was going on, and in order to repress it a number of the

On June 23rd, 1852, nearly four years after he entered the Royal Military Academy, Charles Gordon passed out with the rank of second lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. Notwithstanding some remissness in his work, he had passed through all his examinations—"Those terrible examinations," as he said long years afterwards—"how I remember them! Sometimes I dream of them,"—and in accordance with the regulations in force he was sent to Chatham for the purpose of completing there his technical training as an engineer officer. Chatham, as is well known, is the Headquarters of the Royal Engineer Corps, to which it stands in the same relation as Woolwich to the Artillery. There Gordon remained until February 1854, constantly engaged on field work and in making plans and surveys, at which his old skill as a draughtsman soon made him exceptionally competent. This kind of work was also far more congenial to him than the cramming at the Academy, and he soon gained the reputation of being an intelligent and hard-working subaltern. In the month named he attained the grade of full lieutenant, and on taking his step he was at once ordered to Pembroke Dock, then one of the busiest naval depôts and most important military arsenals in the country. The war clouds were already lowering over Eastern Europe, and although all hope of maintaining peace had not been abandoned, arrangements were in progress for the despatch, if necessary, of a strong naval and military expedition to the Black Sea.

At Pembroke, Gordon was at once employed on the construction of the new fortifications and batteries considered necessary for the defence of so important a position, and in one of his letters home he wrote: "I have been very busy in doing plans for another fort, to be built at the entrance of the haven. I pity the officers and men who will have to live in these forts, as they are in the most desolate places, seven miles from any town, and fifteen from any conveyance." Seclusion and solitude had evidently no charms for him at that period. In another letter about this time he wrote expressing his relief at being "free from the temptations of a line regiment," and concluded with the self-depreciatory remark that he was "such a miserable wretch that he was sure to be led away." In yet another letter from Pembroke, written not many weeks after his arrival, he reveals something of the deep religious feeling which was no doubt greatly strengthened by his experiences in the Crimea, and which became stronger and more pronounced as years went on. In writing to his favourite sister in the summer of 1854, he gives the following interesting bit of biographical information: "You know I never was confirmed. When I was a cadet I thought it was a useless sin, as I did not intend to alter (not that it was in my power to be converted when I

chose). I, however, took my first sacrament on Easter Day (16th April 1854) and have communed ever since."

Charles Gordon was still occupied on the Pembroke fortifications when war broke out with Russia on the Eastern Question. His father was at the time stationed at Gibraltar in command of the Royal Artillery, and was never employed nearer the scene of hostilities during the war. But his two elder brothers were at the front—the eldest, the late Sir Henry Gordon, at Balaclava, where he served in the Commissariat, and the next brother, the late General Enderby Gordon, with his battery under Lord Raglan. At the battle of the Alma, fought on 20th September 1854, Enderby Gordon specially distinguished himself, for he worked one of the two guns of Turner's Battery, which exercised such a decisive influence on the fortunes of the day. Readers of Kinglake's "History" will remember that it was the flank fire of these two guns which compelled the Russian battery of sixteen guns on the Causeway to retire and thus expose the Russian front to our attack. It is a little curious to find that while one brother was thus distinguishing himself in the first battle of the war, another was writing from Pembroke Dock as follows: "— says there were no artillery engaged in the battle of the Alma, so that Enderby was safe out of that." Enderby Gordon also distinguished himself at Inkerman, where he acted as aide-de-camp to General Strangeways. He subsequently earned the reputation of a good officer during the Indian Mutiny, and when he died he had, like his father, attained the rank of Lieutenant-General, and received besides the Companionship of the Bath. One characteristic incident has been recorded of him. As he commanded a column in India, he had only to ask for promotion to obtain it; this he declined to do, because he would thus have stepped over a friend.

In General Gordon's own letters from the Crimea there are frequent references to his eldest brother, Henry Gordon, a man of whom it may be said here that the best was never publicly known, for during a long and varied career, first in the combative branch of the army as an officer of the 59th Regiment, and then as a non-combative officer in the Ordnance Department, he showed much ability, but had few opportunities of special distinction. In several of General Gordon's transactions Sir Henry was closely mixed up, especially with the Congo mission; and I should like to say, of my own knowledge, that he was thoroughly in sympathy with all his projects for the suppression of the slave trade, had mastered the voluminous Blue Books and official papers, from the time of Ismail to the dark days of Khartoum, in so thorough a manner that the smallest detail was fixed in his brain, and had so completely assimilated his brother's views that an hour's consul-



leave for the Crimea without delay in charge of huts. It seems that the change in his destination was due to Sir John Burgoyne, to whom he had expressed the strongest wish to proceed to the scene of war. On 4th December 1854, he received his orders at Pembroke, on the 6th he reported himself at the War Office, and in the evening of the same day he was at Portsmouth. It was at first intended that he should go out in a collier, but he obtained permission to proceed *vid* Marseilles, which he pronounced "extremely lucky, as I am such a bad sailor." This opinion was somewhat qualified later on when he found that the Government did not prepay his passage, and he expressed the opinion pretty freely, in which most people would concur, that "it is very hard not to give us anything before starting." He left London on the 14th December, Marseilles in a French hired transport on the 18th, and reached Constantinople the day after Christmas Day. He was not much struck with anything he saw; pronounced Athens "very ugly and dirty," and the country around uncommonly barren; and was disappointed with the far-famed view on approaching Constantinople. The professional instinct displayed itself when he declared that the forts of the Dardanelles did not appear to be very strong, as, although numerous, they were open at the rear and overlooked by the heights behind. On 28th December Gordon left Constantinople in the *Golden Fleece* transport conveying the 39th Regiment to Balaclava. The important huts had not yet arrived in the collier from Portsmouth, but they could not be far behind, and Gordon went on in advance. The huts, it may be added, were built to contain twenty-four men, or two captains and four subalterns, or two field-officers or one general, and the number of these entrusted to the charge of Gordon was 320. These reinforcements were the first sent out to mitigate the hardships the British Army underwent during a campaign that the genius of Todleben and the fortitude of his courageous garrison rendered far more protracted and costly than had been anticipated.

repulsed with heavy loss on both sides, and with the result that more than six months elapsed before they again ventured to show any inclination to attack in the open field, and then only to meet with fresh discomfiture on the banks of the Tchernaya.

The battle of Inkerman was fought in the early morning of 5th November, and again the brunt of the fighting fell on the English army. The Russian General, Todleben, subsequently stated that he reluctantly decided to attack the English camp instead of the French, because "the English position seemed to be so very weak." Here again the losses give no misleading idea of the proportionate share of the two allied armies in the struggle. While the Russian loss was put down in all at 11,000 men, the French lost 143 killed and 786 wounded; the English, 597 killed and 1760 wounded.

The opinion has been confidently expressed that if a rapid advance and attack had been made on Sebastopol immediately after Inkerman, the fortress would have been easily captured; but both before and during the siege the Russians made the best use of every respite the Allies gave them, and this lost opportunity, if it was one, never recurred. It will thus be seen that some of the most interesting incidents of the war had passed before Gordon set foot in the Crimea, but for an engineer officer the siege and capture of the fortress created by Todleben under the fire of his foes presented the most attractive and instructive phase of the campaign.

At this time the French army mustered about 100,000 men, the British about 23,000, and the Russian garrison of Sebastopol 25,000. In addition, there was a covering army, under the Grand Dukes and General Liprandi, which, despite its losses at Inkerman, was probably not less than 60,000 but the successive defeats at Alma, Balaclava, and Inkerman had broken the confidence of the troops and reduced their leaders to inaction. The batteries were nearly completed when Gordon reached the front, and a good deal had already been written and said about the hardships of the soldiers. Gordon was a man of few wants, who could stand any amount of fatigue, and throughout his life he was always disposed to think that soldiers should never complain. Writing as late as 12th February 1855, when the worst of the winter was over, he says: "There are really no hardships for the officers; the men are the sufferers, and that is partly their own fault, as they are like children, thinking everything is to be done for them. The French soldier looks out for himself, and consequently fares much better." Something of the same conclusion had been forced on him when on board the French transport between Marseilles and Athens when he wrote: "The poor French soldiers, of whom there were 320 on board

in the open ground, it was a defiance which could not be tolerated, and the French accordingly made their arrangements to assault it. Kinglake has graphically described the surprise of the French when they discovered this "white circlet or loop on the ground," and the attempt made by three battalions, with two other battalions in reserve, to capture it. A battalion of Zouaves, under the command of Colonel Cere, carried it in fine style, but the Russian reserves came up in great force, and their own reserves "declining to come to the scratch," as Gordon laconically put it, the Zouaves were in their turn compelled to fall back, with a loss of 200 killed. Encouraged by this success, the Russians gave the French another surprise a few days later, throwing up a second battery 300 yards further in advance of the first "white circlet." These two batteries, mounting between them, according to Kinglake, twenty-two guns, were finally strengthened and equipped by 10th March, and although the French talked much of storming them, nothing was done, much to Gordon's disgust. It was while these operations were in progress that Charles Gordon had a narrow escape of being killed. A shot from one of the Russian rifle-pits "as nearly as possible did for me," he wrote; "the bullet was fired not 180 yards off, and passed an inch above my nut into a bank I was passing." His only comment on this is very characteristic: "They are very good marksmen; their bullet is large and pointed."

This was the first but not the last escape he had during the siege. One of his brothers, writing home some three months later, a few days before the assault on the Redan, wrote as follows: "Charlie has had a miraculous escape. The day before yesterday he saw the smoke from an embrasure on his left and heard a shell coming, but did not see it. It struck the ground about five yards in front of him and burst, not touching him. If it had not burst it would have taken his head off." Of this later shave Gordon himself says nothing, but he describes a somewhat similar incident, which had, however, a fatal result. "We lost one of our captains named Craigie by a splinter of a shell. The shell burst above him, and by what is called chance struck him in the back, killing him at once."

During the three months March, April, and May, the siege languished, and Gordon apologises for the stupidity of his letters with the graphic observation: "It is not my fault, as none of the three nations—French, English, or Russian—will do anything."

At the end of May, however, there was a renewal of activity. General Pelissier succeeded to the French command, and, unlike his predecessors, made it his primary object to act in cordial co-operation with the English commander. He was also in favour of an energetic pro-

French took twenty guns and 400 prisoners, and found the Mamelon so traversed as to have no difficulty in making their lodgment. We were driven from the Quarries three times in the night, the Russians having directed all their efforts against them. Our loss is supposed to be 1000 killed and wounded. Nearly all our working party had to be taken for fighting purposes. The attacking columns were 200 strong; one went to the right, and the other to the left of the Quarries. The reserve consisted of 600 men. The Russians fought desperately."

A further week was occupied with a heavy but desultory bombardment, but at last on 17th June what is known as "the fourth bombardment" proper began, and after it had continued for about twenty-four hours, orders were given for the assault to be made by the French on the Malakoff and the English on the Redan on the 18th June, a date ever memorable in military annals. The silence of the Russian guns induced a belief that the allied fire had overpowered theirs, and in consequence orders for the attack were given twenty-four hours sooner than had been intended. Kinglake, in his exhaustive History, has shown how this acted adversely on the chances of the assault, because the Russian gunners had really only reserved their fire, and also especially because the Redan, which we had to attack under the original arrangement between Lord Raglan and General Pelissier, had hardly suffered any damage from the bombardment. General Gordon's long account of this memorable assault will long be referred to as a striking individual experience:—

"I must now commence my long story of our attempted assault. To take up my account from 14th June, which was the last letter I wrote to you, Seeley, my fellow-subaltern at Pembroke, arrived on the 15th, and joined the right. On the evening of the 16th it was rumoured we were to commence firing again in the morning. I was on duty on the morning of the 17th, and I went down at half-past two A.M. At 3 A.M. all our batteries opened, and throughout the day kept up a terrific fire. The Russians answered slowly, and after a time their guns almost ceased. I mentioned in my report that I thought they were reserving their fire. [If this view had only been taken by the Generals, especially Pelissier, a dreadful waste of life would have been averted, and the result might have proved a brilliant success.] We did not lose many men. I remained in the trenches until 7 P.M.—rather a long spell—and on coming up dined, and found an order to be at the night attack at twelve midnight on June 17 and 18. I was attached to Bent's column, with Lieutenants Murray and Graham, R.E., and we were to go into the Redan at the Russians' right flank. Another column, under Captain de Moleyns and Lieutenants Donnelly and

James, R.E., was to go in at the angle of the salient; and another under Captain Jesse, Lieutenants Fisher and Graves, was to go in at the Russian left flank. We passed along in our relative positions up to the advanced trench, which is 200 yards from the Redan, where we halted until the signal for the attack should be given from the eight-gun battery, where Lord Raglan, Sir G. Brown, and General Jones were.

"About 3 A.M. the French advanced on the Malakoff Tower in three columns, and ten minutes after this our signal was given. The Russians then opened with a fire of grape, which was terrific. They mowed down our men in dozens, and the trenches, being confined, were crowded with men, who foolishly kept in them instead of rushing over the parapet of our trenches, and by coming forward in a mass, trusting to some of them at least being able to pass through untouched to the Redan, where of course, once they arrived, the artillery could not reach them, and every yard nearer would have diminished the effect of the grape by giving it less space for spreading. We could then have moved up our supports and carried the place.

"Unfortunately, however, our men dribbled out of the ends of the trenches, ten and twenty at a time, and as soon as they appeared they were cleared away. Some hundred men, under Lieutenant Fisher, got up to the abattis, but were not supported, and consequently had to retire.

"About this time the French were driven from the Malakoff Tower, which I do not think they actually entered, and Lord Raglan very wisely would not renew the assault, as the Redan could not be held with the Malakoff Tower in the hands of the Russians. Murray, poor fellow, went out with the skirmishers of our column—he in red, and they in green. He was not out a minute when he was carried back with his arm shattered with grape. Colonel Tylden called for me, and asked me to look after him, which I did, and as I had a tourniquet in my pocket I put it on. He bore it bravely, and I got a stretcher and had him taken back. He died three hours afterwards. I am glad to say that Dr Bent reports he did not die from loss of blood, but from the shock, not being very strong.

"A second after Murray had gone to the rear, poor Tylden, struck by grape in the legs, was carried back, and although very much depressed in spirits he is doing well. Jesse was killed at the abattis—shot through the head—and Graves was killed further in advance than any one. We now sat still waiting for orders, and the Russians amusing themselves by shelling us from mortars. When we appeared, the Russians lined their parapets as thick as possible, and seemed to be expecting us to come on. They flew two flags on the Malakoff Tower the whole time in defiance of us. About ten o'clock some of the regiments got orders

were no less than thirty-six mines loaded and tamped. I saw one myself in the upper tier when I was surveying it. They (the Russians) worked out a strata of clay between two layers of rock, so that no wood was required to keep the earth from falling in."

Soon after these letters a truce was concluded with the Russians in anticipation of the peace which was ultimately signed at Paris in March 1856. The prospects of peace were not altogether agreeable to the English army, which had been raised to an effective strength of more than 40,000 men, and was never in a better condition for war than at the end of the two years since it first landed in the Chersonese. Gordon's correspondence contains two or three remarks, giving characteristic evidence to the strength and extent of this sentiment.

In one passage he says: "We do not, generally speaking, like the thought of peace until after another campaign. I shall not go to England, but expect I shall remain abroad for three or four years, which *individually* I would sooner spend in war than peace. There is something indescribably exciting in the former."

Another comment to the same effect is the following: "Suders, the Russian General, reviewed us and the French army last week. He must have thought our making peace odd."

Gordon did not obtain any honour or promotion for his Crimean services. He was included in Sir Harry Jones's list of Engineer Subalterns who had specially distinguished themselves during the siege. The French Government, more discerning than his own, awarded him the Legion of Honour.

The letters from the Crimea are specially interesting for the light they throw on General Gordon's character. They illustrate better than anything else he wrote during his career the soldierly side of his character. The true professional spirit of the man of war peers forth in every sentence, and his devotion to the details of his work was a good preparatory course for that great campaign in China where his engineering skill, not less than his military genius, was so conspicuously shown. As a subaltern in the Crimea Gordon showed himself zealous, daring, vigilant, and with that profound national feeling that an army of Englishmen was the finest fighting force in the world, combined with an inner conviction that of that army his kindred Highlanders were the most intrepid and leading cohort. This was a far more attractive and comprehensible personality than the other revealed in later days, of the Biblical pedant seeking to reconcile passing events with ancient Jewish prophecies, and to see in the most ordinary occurrences the workings of a resistless and unalterable fate. That was not the true

ment of the Powers, as France gave up the case, and thus encouraged Russia to prove more obdurate. But England and the other Powers stood firm, and Bolgrad was included in Moldavia.

The following extracts give a tolerably complete account of what was done. Writing from Kichenicf on 9th January 1857, Gordon said :

"We are now settled as to the frontier question. Russia has given up Bolgrad and received a portion of territory in exchange equal to that surrendered, both as to number of inhabitants and also as to extent of land. This mode of compensation will give us more than half our work to do over again. I had almost finished my plans, and one-half of these will have to be redrawn. However, it is a consolation to know that the thing is settled. We heard all this by telegraph from Paris, and by the same message learnt that we are to proceed at once to work on the frontier in order to get it finished by 30th March, and thus allow of the ceded territory being handed over to the Moldavians on that day. You may imagine what a hurry they are in to get this finished. The Russians pretend to believe that they have got the best of the dispute, but it will be difficult to persuade the world to be of the same opinion. Although so cold, there is not much snow, and it is beautifully clear weather, capital for sledging. The new frontier leaves Tobak and Bolgrad in Moldavia, and gives a piece of land near the Pruth in exchange to Russia. . . . The territory will be given over in two parts. The southern consists of Ismail, Kilia, Reni, and Bolgrad, as well as the delta of the Danube. The northern part consists of the land between the Pruth and Yalpuh. . . . We have finished our work, everything has been signed, and the total number of the plans we have made is upwards of 100. For my part, I have had enough of them for my whole life."

This wish was not to be gratified, for before Colonel Stanton's Commission was dissolved orders came for him to hand over his officers and men to Colonel—now Field-Marshal Sir Lintorn—Simmons, for the purpose of settling the boundary in Armenia, where a dispute had arisen about the course of the river Aras, the ancient Araxes. Gordon, who had now had two and a half years of foreign service without a break, did not relish this task, and even went to the expense of telegraphing for permission to exchange; but this effort was in vain, for the laconic reply of the Commander-in-Chief was: "Lieutenant Gordon must go." If Gordon had under-estimated the time required for the Bessarabian delimitation, he slightly over-estimated that for the Armenian, as his anticipated two years was diminished in the result to twenty-one months.

He left Constantinople on 1st May 1857 on board a Turkish steamer, *Kars*, bound for Trebizonde. The ship was overcrowded

fought in August 1854, before any English officer had arrived in this country. The Russian loss was very severe: there were 3,200 wounded alone brought into Gumri for treatment. The first day from Gumri we passed Baiandoor, where the Turks and Russians had a small battle in 1853, and where the former lost a splendid opportunity of taking Gumri, which was nearly denuded of troops. My Turkish colleague, Osman Bey (I believe this officer to be identical with Ghazi Osman, the defender of Plevna), was present, and got into Gumri as a spy, disguised in the character of a servant. The Russian army avenged the slight check they received from the Turks by taking all their artillery of the right wing."

As illustrating his professional zeal and powers of scientific examination, the following description of the fortress of Alexandropol or Gumri is a striking production from so young an officer:—

"The fortress of Alexandropol ( $40^{\circ} 47'$  N. lat.,  $43^{\circ}$  long.  $45'$  E., 4500 feet above the sea) is situated on the left bank of the river Arpatchai, which here forms the boundary between Russia and Turkey. It is distant thirty-five miles from Kars and eighty-four miles from Tiflis. The plain on which it is situated is perfectly level and very peculiar. It has a stratum of alluvial soil for the depth of one foot six inches on the surface, and then a substratum of fine uniform lava, ten to fifteen feet thick, supposed to have issued from Mount Alagos (13,450 feet), an extinct volcano thirty miles from Alexandropol. The depth of the earth allows the growth of grain, but entirely prevents that of trees, which with their roots cannot penetrate into the lava. The Russians have taken advantage of this bed of lava in the ditch of the fortress. The fortress is well constructed and in perfect repair. There are upwards of 200 guns (varying from 36-pounders to 12-pounders) mounted on the works, and about 100 in reserve, of which 30 are field-guns with their equipment wagons, etc. The garrison would be 5000 to 6000, including artillery. There are large supplies of ammunition and military stores. The ditch, twelve feet deep, of the two western fronts has not been excavated near the flanks on account of the expense. The Russians have constructed in the centres of the two curtains a *caponnière* with two guns in each flank to defend the dead angles caused by the non-excavation of the whole of the ditch. In the centre of these two fronts is a large *caponnière*, mounting ten guns in the upper tier and eight in the lower tier. This *caponnière* is on a lower level than the enceinte of the place. The counterscarp at the north-west and south-west angles of these two fronts is for the distance of twenty yards composed of a crenellated wall four feet six inches thick. This was caused by the irregularity of the ground. The bomb-proof barracks of



the northern fronts mount in casemate two tiers of fourteen guns at the curtains. The flanks have five guns in casemates open to the rear, in addition to the guns on the parapet above. The lunette in the ditch is eight feet deep. The eastern front has an escarp fourteen feet high cut in the lava, and well flanked by the *caponnière* defending the entrances, mounting four guns. The bomb-proof barracks in the northern fronts have one tier of eight guns in casemate at the curtains, and three guns in each flank in casemates open to the rear. The two out-works are closed at the gorge with a loopholed wall, flanked by a small guard-house. They have no ditches, but an escarp of ten feet in the lava. The tower marked *A* in my plan is sixty yards in diameter, with a well in the centre. It has its gorge closed with a ditch and loopholed wall. It mounts fifteen guns on the top, and fifteen guns in casemate. It is proposed to connect it by a crenellated wall with the main work. The tower marked *B* has a ditch and small glacis. It mounts eight guns in casemate, and eight on the top. Its object is to flank the long ravine which runs southward from it. All the buildings in the interior of the fortress are bomb-proof. The great fault of the fortress as it is constructed at present is that it does not so much as see the town with its population of 9310. It is now proposed, however, to make a large work on the site marked *K* with a view of meeting this want. During the war in 1853, when the Turks were 35,000 strong at Baiandoor, six miles from Alexandropol, and the Russians had only two battalions in the fortress, the latter demolished all the houses which were on this ground. I think that should it ever be in our power to besiege this place (which is not likely, from the enormous difficulty of getting a siege train there), that batteries might be established on the hillocks between the fortress and the river, to breach the large *caponnière* and the tower *A* which, from the formation of the ground, would not be opposed by more fire than the direct fire of the works they were intended to breach, and which would be limited by their circular form to about seven guns. The soil is not unfavourable on these hills. The hill on which the cemetery of the officers killed at Kars and Kuyukdere is situated is also favourable for batteries. The principal well, which is sunk to a good depth, is in the north-eastern bastion."

General Gordon's letters contain two or three interesting descriptions that, in view of more recent events, deserve quotation. Of the Kurds he thus speaks, and the description stands good at the present day :—

"We met on our road a great number of Kurds, who live as their fathers did, by travelling about, robbing, etc., with their flocks. Their

or Russian slope of Ararat, and passed through a very old city called Kourgai, where there are still the remains of a church and part of an old castle. Even the Armenians do not pretend to know its history, but some of them say that Noah lived there. It is situated half-way up the mountain, and there is no living person within twelve miles of it. There used to be a populous village named Aralik, with 5000 inhabitants, a little above it, but in 1840 an earthquake shook Mount Ararat, and in four minutes an immense avalanche had buried this place so completely as to leave scarcely any vestige of its site. Not a single person escaped, which is not to be wondered at, considering the mass that fell. Stones of twenty or thirty tons were carried as far as fifteen to twenty miles into the plain. It has left a tremendous cleft in Ararat itself. Other villages were destroyed at the same time, but none so completely as this. The village immediately below Aralik was also destroyed, but the graveyard remained untouched, and the tombstones stand up intact in the midst of the ruins. The common people say that it was saved on account of a saint who was buried there. All these places have a very lonely look. Both the Kurds and the Armenians, if they can possibly help it, never pass near Mount Ararat, while they think it a great sin to ascend it.

"I must now tell you of my ascent, or rather my near ascent, of Great Ararat.

"I and my interpreter and three sappers went up to a Kurdish encampment where an old Kurd lived who assisted five of our countrymen to ascend about two years ago. The only assistance, however, that he appeared able to give us was to show us where these Englishmen had encamped the night before their ascent. We consequently pitched our tents there, and settled ourselves for the night. The night proved to be very stormy, with thunder and rain, which was a bad lookout for us. However, we started at 4 A.M. the next morning, and had some very hard work up to the line of perpetual snow. My interpreter and two of the sappers gave it up before this, but I and the other, Corporal Fisher, held on.

"The whole of this time there was a thick fog, which now and then cleared away, though only for brief moments, and enabled us to get a splendid view of the country spread out as a map beneath us, with cumuli clouds floating about. The snow which I mounted was at a very steep slope, and quite hard, nearly ice, on the surface. It was so steep that we could not sit down without holding on tightly to our poles. Corporal Fisher was about half a mile to my left, and had a better ascent as it was not quite so steep. About two o'clock I began to get very tired, not able to get up more than two yards

without resting. This was caused by the rarefaction of the air. The mist cleared just at this time for a minute, and I was enabled to see the summit about 1000 feet above me, but still a further very steep ascent. Little Ararat was also visible 3000 feet below me. It began to snow soon after this, and became intensely cold. The two together settled me, and I turned round, although very reluctantly, and sitting down, slid over in a very few minutes the distance which had taken me so many hours to clamber up. Corporal Fisher managed to get up to the top, and describes the crater to be very shallow, although the top is very large. The Kurd told me afterwards that the road I took was very difficult, and that the other English explorers went up a road which was comparatively easy. I believe, however, that if the weather had been more favourable I should have succeeded."

This was not his only mountaineering experience. Some weeks later he ascended Mount Alagos—that is, the Motley Mount, from its various colours. It is 13,480 feet above the sea, or about 3000 feet lower than Ararat.

"We started with some Kurdish guides to the mountain, and after a good deal of delay got to the place where the only path to the summit commences. Here we were obliged to dismount and take to our legs. After about two hours and a half we got to the summit, and were extremely glad of it, for although it is not to be compared to Mount Ararat, it is still rather difficult. Trusting to my Ararat experience, I thought of descending in the snow, and started. I was much astonished at finding the slope far steeper than I expected, and consequently went down like a shot, and reached the bottom one hour and a half before the others. A Russian doctor tried it after me, and in trying to change his direction was turned round, and went to the bottom sometimes head foremost. He was not a bit hurt. There was no danger, as we had only to keep ourselves straight. My trousers are the only sufferers! I was the first up. None of the Russians succeeded!"

With one more quotation, Gordon's description of Etchmiazin, the celebrated monastery where the Armenian Catholicos resides, the extracts from these early letters may be concluded:—

"We passed through the oldest of the Armenian churches and monasteries, a place called Etchmiazin. It professes to be 1500 years old, and certainly has the appearance of great antiquity; it was existing during the time of the ruined city of Ani, and is built in a similar style. The relics there are greatly esteemed. People make pilgrimages to this monastery from all parts. There is, firstly, an arm of St Gregory, which is enclosed in a gold case covered with precious stones;

"Some way beyond Taiyuen they came upon the pass over the mountains which led down into the country drained by the Peiho. The descent was a terrible one. All along the cold had been intense—so much so that raw eggs were frozen hard as if they had been boiled. To add to their troubles, when they were on in front their carts were attacked by robbers; but the Chinese lad—an ugly imp—kept them off with his gun. When they drew near Paoting-fu they sent on with the lad the two carts and their tired horses, which had now carried them for three weeks without the break of a single day, and they hired a fresh cart in which they thought to ride to Tientsin. But with the boy gone they had no interpreter, and in their impatience, 'their new driver'—to quote our traveller's own words—'got rather crossly dealt with.' They stopped near Paoting-fu for the night. Early next morning as they were washing they heard the gates of the inn open and the rumble of cart-wheels. They guessed what was happening. 'Half stripped as I was, I rushed out and saw our cart bolting away. I ran for a mile after it, but had to come back and hire another with which we got to Tientsin—more than fourteen days over our leave.'"

From this pleasant but uneventful occupation Gordon was summoned to a scene where important events were in progress, and upon which he was destined to play what was perhaps, after all, the most brilliant part in the long course of his remarkable career. His brother puts the change into a single sentence:—

"On the 28th of April 1862 Captain Gordon left the Peiho and arrived at Shanghai on 3rd of May, and at once dropped into the command of a district with the charge of the engineer part of an expedition about to start, with the intention of driving the rebels out of a circuit of thirty miles from Shanghai."

By the end of March 1862 the Chinese Government had sufficiently carried out its obligations to admit of the withdrawal of the force at Tientsin, and General Staveley transferred the troops and his quarters from that place to Shanghai, where the Taeping rebels were causing the European settlement grave anxiety, and what seemed imminent peril. The Taipings, of whose rebellion some account will be given in the next chapter, were impelled to menace Shanghai by their own necessities. They wanted arms, ammunition, and money, and the only means of obtaining them was by the capture of the great emporium of foreign trade. But such an adventure not merely implied a want of prudence and knowledge, it could only be attempted by a breach of their own promises. When Admiral Hope had sailed up the Yangtsekiang and visited Nanking, he demanded and received from Tien Wang, the Taeping king or leader, a promise that the

Taeping forces should not advance within a radius of thirty miles of Shanghai. That promise in its larger extent had soon been broken, and an attack on Shanghai itself, although unsuccessful, crowned the offences of the rebels, and entailed the chastisement a more prudent course would have averted. Without entering into the details here that will be supplied later on, it will suffice to say that in January 1862 the Taepings advanced against Shanghai, burning all the villages *en route*, and laid irregular siege to it during more than six weeks. Although they suffered several reverses, the European garrison was not in sufficient strength to drive them away, and a general anxiety prevailed among the European community when the arrival of General Staveley altered the posture of affairs.

Before Gordon arrived two affairs of some importance had taken place. At Wongkadza, a village twelve miles west of Shanghai, General Staveley obtained a considerable success, which was, however, turned into a disaster by the disobedience of his orders. The Taepings had retired to some stronger stockades, and General Staveley had ordered the postponement of the attack until the next day, when the trained Chinese troops, carried away by their leaders' impetuosity, renewed the assault. The result was a rude repulse, with the loss of nearly 100 men killed and wounded. The next day the stockades were evacuated, and within another week the fortified villages of Tsipu and Kahding were also taken. It was at this point that Gordon arrived from Tientsin, and reached the scene of action just as the arrangements for attacking the important village of Tsingpu were being completed.

That the Taepings were not contemptible adversaries, at least those under their redoubtable leader Chung Wang, was shown by their attempting to destroy Shanghai by fire, even while these operations were in progress. The plot nearly succeeded, but its promoters were severely punished by the summary execution of 200 of their number. The force assembled for the attack on Tsingpu assumed almost the dimensions of an army. General Staveley commanded 1,429 British troops with twenty guns and mortars, in addition to a naval brigade of 380 men and five guns. There was also a French contingent of 800 men and ten guns, under Admiral Protet. At Tsingpu Gordon specially distinguished himself by the manner in which he reconnoitred the place, and then placed and led the ladder parties after two breaches had been pronounced practical. The Taepings fought well, but the place was carried, and the Chinese auxiliaries killed every one they found with arms in their hands. Commenting on Gordon's part in this affair, General Staveley wrote in his official despatch:—

position by 5 P.M. On the 17th we opened fire at seven, and attacked the place. Here Admiral Protet was killed; he was among 500 men, and was the only one struck. The town was a wretched affair, and a good many Chang-mows escaped. These Chang-mows are very funny people; they always run when attacked. They are ruthlessly cruel, and have a system of carrying off small boys under the hope of training them up as rebels. We always found swarms of these boys who had been taken from their parents (whom the rebels had killed) in the provinces.

"I saved one small creature who had fallen into the ditch in trying to escape, for which he rewarded me by destroying my coat with his muddy paws in clinging to me. I started soon after the attack for Cholin, and got there on the 18th. The rebels had made a *sortie* since my departure, and had got into a pretty mess. Willes let them come up and then advanced on them; over sixty were killed, and several taken prisoners. The General then came. We got our guns in position during the night, opened fire next morning, and assaulted at seven. The place was miserable and poor. The Armstrong guns, which enfiladed one face, did great execution."

The fruits of these successes were lost by the signal overthrow and practical annihilation of a large Chinese army at Taitsan. One of General Staveley's detachments was cut off, and with his communications threatened he found himself compelled to abandon Kahding, and to retire towards Shanghai. Tsingpu had also to be abandoned, and the garrison suffered some loss in effecting its retreat. Of the first results of General Staveley's campaign there thus remained very little, and it was only in the autumn that these places were retaken, and the campaign against the Taepings in the Shanghai districts continued with varying fortune throughout the remainder of the year 1862 and the early months of 1863.

While these military events were in progress Major Gordon, who was raised to the rank of Major in the army in December 1862 for his services in China, had been trusted with the congenial task, and one for which he was pre-eminently well suited, of surveying and mapping the whole of the region for thirty miles. This work, necessary in itself for many reasons, proved of incalculable value to him in the operations which he eventually undertook and carried out to a successful issue against the rebels. His own letters show how thoroughly he fulfilled his instructions, and how his surveys ended in his complete mastery of the topography of the region between the Grand Canal, the sea, and the Yangtsekiang:—

"I have been now in every town and village in the thirty miles'

the world, and they succeeded in recruiting about 100 Europeans and 200 Manilla men or Spanish half-breeds.

In order to test the quality of this force it was decided to attack Sungkiang; and in July, only a week or so after it was organised, Ward led his somewhat motley band against that place. The result was unfavourable, as his attack was repulsed with some loss. Nothing daunted, Ward collected some more Manilla men and renewed the attack. He succeeded in capturing one of the gates, and in holding it until an Imperial army of 10,000 men arrived, when the town was carried by storm. Having thus proved its mettle, Ward's force became very popular, and it was increased by many fresh recruits, chiefly Greeks and Italians. It also was strengthened by the addition of some artillery, two six-pounder and later two eighteen-pounder guns.

The Chinese merchants then offered Ward and his quarter-master Burgevine a large reward for the capture of Tsingpu; and their legion, accompanied by a Chinese force of 10,000 men, who were, however, only to look on while it did the fighting, accordingly marched on that place. The attack made during the night of 2nd August resulted in a most disastrous repulse, most of the Europeans being either killed or wounded, Ward himself receiving a severe wound in the jaw. He renewed the attack with fresh men and two eighteen-pounders three weeks later; but after bombarding the place for seven days, he was attacked by the Taeping hero Chung Wang, and routed, with the loss of his guns and military stores. It was on this occasion that Chung Wang, following up his success, and doubly anxious to capture Shanghai because this new and unexpected force was organised there, attacked that town, and was only repulsed by the English and French troops who lined its walls.

This reverse at Tsingpu destroyed the reputation of Ward's force, and for several months he remained discredited and unemployed. In March 1861 he reappeared at Sungkiang, at the head of sixty or seventy Europeans whom he had recruited for the Imperial cause; but at that moment the policy of the foreign Consuls had undergone a change in favour of the Taipings, and Ward was arrested as a disturber of the peace. Perhaps a more serious offence was that the high pay he offered and prospect of loot had induced nearly thirty British sailors to desert their ships. He was released on his claiming that he was a Chinese subject, and also on his sending orders to his colleague Burgevine to return the troops they had enlisted. Burgevine thought he saw in this a chance of personal distinction, and before disbanding the men he made with them another attack on Tsingpu. This attack, like its two predecessors, was repulsed with heavy loss, and the original Ward force

tions impossible, everything was done to increase both the numbers and the efficiency of the Ever Victorious Army. By the month of July its strength had been raised to 5000 men, the commissioned officers being all Europeans except one Chinese, named Wongepoo, who had been given a commission for special gallantry by Admiral Hope. Ward was in chief command, and Colonel Forrester and Burgevine were his first and second lieutenants. When the weather became a little cooler in August, it was determined to utilise this force for the recapture of Tsingpu, which was taken at the second assault on the 9th of that month, although not without heavy loss in officers and men. Six weeks later the important Taeping position at Tseki, across the Hangchow Bay and not far distant from Ningpo, was attacked by Ward and a party of English blue-jackets. The operation was perfectly successful, but Ward was shot in the stomach and died the next day. His loss was a very considerable one, for, as Gordon said, "he managed both the force and the mandarins very ably." Colonel Forrester should have succeeded to the command, but he declined the post, which then devolved upon Burgevine.

After a brief space the services of Captain Holland of the Royal Marine Light Infantry were lent to Burgevine in the capacity of Chief of the staff, and as this was done at the suggestion of the Futai Li—since famous to Europeans as Li Hung Chang—it did not conduce to greater harmony between him and Burgevine, for their antagonism had already become marked. An occasion soon offered to fan this feeling to a flame. A Chinese army under Li and General Ching advanced to attack a Taeping position near Tsingpu, at the same time that Burgevine at the head of his corps assailed it from the other side. The brunt of the fighting fell on the latter, but when Li issued his bulletin he claimed all the credit of the victory, and totally ignored Burgevine and his men. Burgevine did not accept this rebuff meekly, and his peremptory manner offended the Chinese. The breach was widened by the distrust many of the Chinese merchants as well as officials felt as to his loyalty, and soon it was seen that the funds so freely supplied to Ward would not be forthcoming in his case.

Burgevine's character has been described in the following sentence by Gordon himself:—

"He was a man of large promises and few works. His popularity was great among a certain class. He was extravagant in his generosity, and as long as he had anything would divide it with his so-called friends, but never was a man of any administrative or military talent, and latterly, through the irritation caused by his unhealed wound and other causes, he was subject to violent paroxysms of anger,



which rendered precarious the safety of any man who tendered to him advice that might be distasteful. He was extremely sensitive of his dignity."

The situation between the Chinese authorities and Burgevine soon became so strained that the former presented a formal complaint to General Staveley, and begged him to remove Burgevine. This, as the English commander pointed out, was for obvious reasons beyond his power, but he made representations to his Government, and suggested that an English officer should be lent to the Chinese, and he nominated Gordon as the best qualified for the work. Pending the arrival of the required authority, the Chinese, assisted by Burgevine's own impetuosity, brought their relations with him to a climax. The merchant Takee withheld the pay of the force; Burgevine was first ordered to proceed with his troops to Nanking, and then, on consenting, the order was withdrawn; some weeks later a fresh order to the same effect was issued, and Burgevine demanded the payment of all arrears before he would move, and thus Li's object of exposing Burgevine as a disobedient officer to the Government that employed him was attained.

The Ever Victorious Army, excited by the absence of its pay, and worked upon by the exhortations of its chief, was on the point of mutiny, and Burgevine hastened to Shanghai to obtain by force rather than persuasion the arrears. On 4th January 1863 he saw Takee, a violent scene ensued, and Burgevine used violence. Not only did he strike Takee, but he carried off the treasure necessary to pay his men. Such conduct could not be upheld or excused. Li Hung Chang made the strongest complaint. Burgevine was dismissed the Chinese service, and General Staveley forwarded the notice to him with a quiet intimation that it would be well to give up his command without making a disturbance. Burgevine complied with this advice, handed over the command to Captain Holland, and came back to Shanghai on 6th of January. He published a defence of his conduct, and expressed his regret for having struck Takee.

Captain Holland was thus the third commander of the Ever Victorious Army, and a set of regulations was drawn up between Li Hung Chang and General Staveley as to the conduct and control of the force. It was understood that Captain Holland's appointment was only temporary until the decision of the Government as to Gordon's nomination arrived, but this arrangement allowed of the corps again taking the field, for although it cost the Chinese £30,000 a month, it had done nothing during the last three months of the year 1862. Early in February 1863, therefore, Captain Holland, at the head of 2,300 men, including a strong force of artillery—600 men and

twenty-two guns and mortars — was directed to attack Taitsan, an important place about fifty miles north-east of Shanghai. An Imperialist army of nearly 10,000 men acted in conjunction with it. The affair was badly managed and proved most disastrous.

After a short bombardment a breach was declared to be practicable, and the ladder and storming parties were ordered to the assault. Unfortunately, the reconnoitring of the Taeping position had been very carelessly done, and the attacking parties were checked by a wet ditch, twenty feet wide and six feet deep, of which nothing had been seen. Situated only forty yards from the wall of the town, and without any means of crossing it, although some few did by throwing across a ladder, the storming party stood exposed to a terrific fire. Captain Holland ordered a retreat, but it was not managed any better than the attack. The light guns were removed too quickly, and the heavy ones were stuck so fast in the mud that they could not be removed at all. The Taepings attacked in their turn, and the greatest confusion prevailed, during which the survivors of the larger half of the Ever Victorious Army escaped in small detachments back to Sungkiang. Twenty European officers were killed or wounded, besides 300 Chinese privates. Captain Holland exposed himself freely, but this, his only action in independent command, resulted in complete and unqualified failure. Gordon himself summed up the causes of this serious and discouraging reverse :—

“The causes of the failure were the too cheap rate at which the rebels were held. The force had hitherto fought with the allies with them (except at Tsingpu). They now had to bear the brunt of the fighting themselves, the mistake of not having provided bridges in spite of the mandarin’s information, and the too close proximity of the heavy guns to the walls, and the want of cover they had, and finally the withdrawal of the lighter guns before the heavy guns, whose removal they should have covered. There is little doubt that the rebels had been warned by persons in Shanghai of the intended attack, and that several foreigners, who had been dismissed by Captain Holland, were with the rebels defending the breach. As may be imagined, Burgevine’s removal had caused considerable feeling among his acquaintances, who were not sorry to see the first expedition of the force under an English officer fail, being in hopes that the command would again revert to Burgevine.”

This reverse occurred on 13th February, and no further steps of any consequence were taken until the appointment of Major Gordon, which at last was sanctioned in the latter portion of March, about a week before ill-health compelled General Staveley to resign his command in

China. That officer was connected with the Gordon family, his sister, a most amiable and sympathetic lady, being Lady Gordon, widow of the late Sir Henry Gordon. As far back as May 1861—that is, prior to most of the events described in this chapter—Gordon's sensitiveness about his family connection with the commanding officer in China had impelled him to write this letter:—

“I was much put out in Henry's writing, and I think hinting he could do something for me, and I went to Staveley and told him so. It is the bother of one's life to be trying after the honours of the profession, and it has grown in late years into a regular trade—everyone uses private interest.”

When Gordon gave this early manifestation of his independent spirit he was little more than twenty-eight years of age, but it should certainly be noted as showing that in one respect he was very little changed in his later years from what he was in his youth.

After these reverses in February nothing more was attempted until Major Gordon arrived at Sungkiang on 25th March 1863 to take over the command of the force. It is to be hoped that the last few pages have made clear what that force was like. In the first place, it had been one composed entirely of Europeans, a band somewhat resembling those that have set up and cast down the mushroom republics that separate the conquests of Pizarro from those of Cortes. That force achieved nothing and had an ignominious end. It was succeeded by the larger force of drilled Chinese, to which was given the name of the Ever Victorious Army. Although these Chinese showed far more courage than might have been expected of them, none of their leaders—Ward, Burgevine, or Holland—seemed able to turn their good qualities to any profitable purpose. They were as often defeated as successful, and at the very moment of Gordon's assuming the command the defeat of Captain Holland at Taitsan, and a subsidiary reverse of Major Tapp at Fushan, had reduced their *morale* to the lowest point, and even justified a belief that for military purposes this force was nearly, if not quite, worthless.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TAEPIING REBELLION.

IN order to bring before the reader the magnitude of Gordon's achievements in China it is necessary to describe briefly the course of the Taeping rebellion, and to show the kind of opponents over whom he was destined to obtain so glorious and decisive a victory. But as this would be to tell a thrice-told tale, I content myself with giving in an abridged form the account I prepared from the papers of General Gordon and other trustworthy sources, which appears in the last volume of my "History of China."

As far back as the year 1830 there had been symptoms of disturbed popular feeling in Kwangsi, the most southern province of China adjacent to Tonquin. The difficulty of operating in a region which possessed few roads, and which was only rendered at all accessible by the West River or Sikiang, had led the Chinese authorities, much engaged as they were about the foreign question, to postpone those vigorous measures, which, if taken at the outset, might have speedily restored peace and stamped out the first promptings of revolt. The authorities were more concerned at the proceedings of the formidable secret Association, known as the "Triads," than at the occurrences in Kwangsi, probably because the Triads made no secret that their object was the expulsion of the Manchus and the restoration of the old Ming dynasty. The true origin of the Triads is not to be assigned, but there seems reasonable ground for the suspicion that they were connected with the discontented monks of a Buddhist monastery which had been suppressed by the Government. Between them they seem to have formed the inception of what became the famous Taping rebellion.

The summer of 1850 witnessed a great accession of energy on the part of the rebels in Kwangsi, which may perhaps have been due to the death of the Emperor Taoukwang. The important town of Wuchow on the Sikiang, close to the western border of Kwantung, was besieged by a force reported to number 50,000 men. The governor was afraid to report the occurrence, knowing that it would

establishing his authority on a sound basis, and in assigning their respective ranks to his principal followers who saw in the conferring of titles and posts, at the moment of little meaning or value, the recognition of their past zeal and the promise of reward for future service. The men who rallied round Tien Wang were schoolmasters and labourers. To these some brigands of the mountain frontier supplied rude military knowledge, while the leaders of the Triads brought as their share towards the realisation of what they represented as a great cause skill in intrigue, and some knowledge of organisation. Neither enthusiasm nor the energy of desperation was wanting; but for those qualities which claim respect, if they cannot command success, we must look in vain. Yet the peasants of Kwangsi and the artisans of Kwantung assumed the title of "Wang" or prince, and divided in anticipation the prizes that should follow the establishment of some dynasty of their own making.

The war dragged on in the Sikiang valley during two years, but the tide of success had certainly set in the main against the Imperialists, as was shown by the scene of operations being transferred to the northern side of that river. The campaign might have continued indefinitely until one side or the other was exhausted had not the state of the province warned Tien Wang that he could not hope to feed much longer the numerous followers who had attached themselves to his cause. He saw that there would very soon remain for him no choice except to retire into Tonquin, and to settle down into the ignominious life of a border brigand. To Tien Wang the thought was intolerable, and in sheer desperation he came to the resolve to march northwards into the interior of China. It was not the inspiration of genius but the pressure of dire need that urged the Taeping leader to issue his orders for the invasion of Hoonan. He issued a proclamation on the eve of beginning this march, announcing that he had received "the divine commission to exterminate the Manchus and to possess the Empire as its true sovereign."

It was at this stage in the rebellion that the name "Taepings" came into general use, and various accounts are given as to its origin. Some say it was taken from the small town of that name in the south-west of Kwangsi, where the insurrection began; others that the characters mean "Universal Peace," and that it was the style assumed by the new dynasty. In seeming contradiction with this is the fact that some of the Taepings themselves declared that they never heard the name, and did not know what it meant. At this particular juncture the rebels were in the heart of Kwangsi, at the district capital of Woosuen. In May 1851 they moved to Siang, a little north of that place. They

for any time was scarcely less dangerous. Necessity compelled them therefore to press on, and in August they captured the three small towns of Kiaho, Ching, and Kweyang. Their next march was both long and forced. Overrunning the whole adjacent country, they appeared early in the month of September before the strong and important town of Changsha, situated on the river Seang, and only fifty miles south of the large lake Tungting.

At this town, the capital of Hoonan, some vigorous preparations had been made to withstand them. Not merely was the usual garrison stationed there, but it so happened that Tseng Kwofan, a man of great ability and some considerable resolution, was residing near the town at the time. Tseng Kwofan had held several offices in the service, and as a member of the Hanlin enjoyed a high position and reputation; but he was absent from the capital on one of those frequent periods of retirement to their native province which the officials of China have to make on the occasion of any near relative's death.

When tidings of the approach of the Taepings reached him he threw himself with all the forces he could collect into Changsha. At the same time he ordered the local militia to assemble as rapidly as possible in the neighbourhood, in order to harass the movements of the enemy. He called upon all those who had the means to show their duty to the state and sovereign by raising recruits or by promising rewards to those volunteers who would serve in the army against the rebels. Had the example of Tseng Kwofan been followed generally, it is not too much to say that the Taepings would never have got to Nanking. As it was, he set the first example of true patriotism, and he had the immediate satisfaction of saving Changsha.

When the Taepings reached Changsha they found the gates closed and the walls manned. They proceeded to lay siege to it; they cut off its supplies, and they threatened the garrison with extermination. They even attempted to carry it by storm on three separate occasions. During eighty days the siege went on; but the Taepings were then compelled to admit that they were as far from success as ever. They had suffered very considerable losses, including another of their Wangs, the Western King, and although it was said that the loss of the Imperialists was larger, they could better afford it. On the 1st December they accordingly abandoned the siege and resumed their march northwards. They crossed the Tungting Lake on boats and junks which they had seized, and secured the town of Yochow on the Yangtsekiang without meeting any resistance. Here they captured much war material, including a large supply of gunpowder left by the great Chinese Viceroy, Wou Sankwei, of the seventeenth century. From Yochow they

hastened down the river. The important city of Hankow surrendered without a blow. The not less important town of Wouchang, on the opposite or southern bank of the river, was then attacked, and after a siege of a fortnight carried by storm. The third town of Hanyang, which completes the busy human hive where the Han joins the great river, did not attempt any resistance.

These successes raised the Taepings from the depths of despair to the heights of hope. The capture of such wealthy places dispelled all their doubt and discouragement. They were able to repay themselves for the losses and hardships they had undergone, and the prize they had thus secured furnished ground for hoping for more. But even now it was no part of their mission to stand still. They waited at Hankow only long enough to attach to their cause the many thousands attracted to Tien Wang's flag by these successes. The possibility of pursuit by Tseng Kwofan at the head of the warlike levies of Hoonan, where each brave is considered equal to two from another province, was still present to their minds. But he unfortunately rested content with his laurels, while the Taepings swept like an irresistible wave or torrent down the valley of the Yangtsekiang.

The capture of Kiukiang, a town situated on the river near the northern extremity of the lake Poyang, and of Ganking followed in quick succession, and on 8th March the Taepings sat down before Nanking, the old capital of the Mings. The siege lasted only sixteen days. Notwithstanding that there was a considerable Manchu force in the Tartar city, which might easily have been defended apart from the Chinese and much larger town, the resistance offered was singularly faint-hearted. The Taepings succeeded in blowing in one of the gates. The townspeople fraternised with the assailants, and the very Manchus, who had looked so valiant in face of Sir Hugh Gough's force ten years before, now surrendered their lives and their honour after a mere show of resistance to a force which was nothing better than an armed rabble. The Manchu colony of Nanking, to the number of some 4000 families, had evidently fallen off from its high renown. Instead of dying at their posts, they threw themselves on the pity of the Taeping leader. Their cowardice helped them not; of 20,000 Manchus not 100 escaped. The tale rests on irrefragable evidence. "We killed them all to the infant in arms; we left not a root to sprout from; and the bodies of the slain we cast into the Yangtse."

The capture of Nanking and this sweeping massacre of the dominant race seemed to point the inevitable finger of fate at the Tatsing dynasty. It was no longer possible to regard Tien Wang and his miscellaneous gathering as an enemy beneath contempt. Without

turned suddenly north at Yuenking, and on reaching Pingyang they again turned in an easterly direction, and secured the Lin Limming Pass which leads into the Metropolitan province of Pechihli. The whole of the autumn of 1853 was taken up with these manœuvres, and it was on 30th September that the Taepings first appeared in the province containing the capital. They met with little or no opposition. They had mystified their pursuers, and surprised the inhabitants of the districts through which they passed. Having forced the Limming Pass, the Taepings found no difficulty in occupying the towns on the south-west border of Pechihli. The defeat of the Manchu garrison in a pass that was considered almost impregnable gave the Taepings the prestige of victory, and the towns opened their gates one after another. They crossed the Hootoo River on a bridge of boats which they constructed themselves, and then occupied the town of Shinchow; on 21st October they reached Tsing, about twenty miles south of Tientsin and only one hundred from Peking; but beyond this point neither then nor at any other time did the rebels succeed in getting.

The forcing of the Limming Pass produced great confusion at Peking. It was no longer a question of suffering subjects and disturbed provinces. The capital of the Empire, the very person of the Emperor, was in imminent danger of destruction at the hands of a ruthless foe. The city was denuded of troops. Levies were hastily summoned from Manchuria in order to defend the line of the Peiho and the approaches to the capital. Had the Taepings shown better generalship there is no saying but that they would have succeeded in capturing it, as the Imperialists had left quite unguarded the approach by Chingting and Paoting, and the capture of Peking would have sounded the knell of the Manchu dynasty. But the Taepings did not seize the chance—if it were one—and they were far from being in the best of spirits. They had advanced far, but it looked as if it was into the lion's mouth. Their march had been a remarkable one, but it had been attended with no striking success. In their front was the Tientsin militia, strengthened by a large if nondescript force, led by the Mongol chief Sankolinsin. In their rear the levies of Hoonan, of the vast district that had suffered from their exactions, were closing up, and soon they were closely beleaguered in a hastily-fortified camp at Tsinghai. In this they were besieged from the end of October to the beginning of March 1854. The Imperial generals, afraid to risk an assault, hoped to starve them out, and so they might have done had not Tien Wang sent a fresh army to extricate this force from its peril. Then the retreat began, but, beset by assailants from every side, it was slow and disastrous. The struggle went on until March 1855, when Sankolinsin was able to declare that



not a Taeping remained north of the Yellow River. Only a very small portion of the two armies sent to capture Peking ever returned to the headquarters of Tien Wang.

While these events, and others that do not call for description as being of minor importance, were in progress, symptoms of disintegration were already beginning to reveal themselves in the camp at Nanking. After its capture Tien Wang himself retired into the interior of his palace and never afterwards appeared in public. All his time was passed in the harem, and the opportunity was thus given his more ambitious lieutenants to assert themselves. Tung Wang, the "Eastern King," became principal Minister. He, too, claimed to have communion with Heaven, and on celestial advice he began to get rid of those of his comrades who opposed his schemes. He even summoned Tien Wang to his presence and reproved him for his proceedings. A plot was then formed against Tung Wang, and he was slain with three of his brothers, in the presence of Tien Wang, by another of the Taeping chiefs. Nor did the slaughter stop there, for it is alleged, although the numbers must not be accepted literally, that 200,000 of his partisans—men, women, and children—were massacred. These internal dissensions threatened to break up the Taeping confederacy, and no doubt they would have done so but for the appearance of the most remarkable man associated with the movement, and one of the most heroic figures in China's history.

A young officer, rejoicing in the innumerable Chinese name of Li, had attracted Tung Wang's favourable notice, and was by him entrusted with a small command. It will be more convenient to speak of him by his subsequent title of Chung Wang, or the "Faithful King." He distinguished himself in his first enterprise by defeating a large Imperial army besieging Chinkiang, and in relieving the garrison when on the point of surrender. But while engaged on this task the Imperialists closed in on his rear and cut off his retreat back to Nanking, whither Tien Wang hastily summoned him to return. He endeavoured to make his way along the northern bank, but was checked at Loohoo by the ex-Triad Chang Kwoliang, the same who deserted the Taipings in Kwangsi. Chang had crossed the river to oppose him, and Chung Wang, hastily conveying his army over the river, fell upon and destroyed the weakened force that the Imperial general had left there, under General Chi, who committed suicide. Chang Kwoliang crossed after him, but only to suffer defeat, and Chung Wang made his way into Nanking. He then attacked the main Imperial army before its walls, under the Emperor's generalissimo Heang Yung, and drove it out of its entrenchments. Heang took his defeat so much to heart that he also committed suicide,

killed or captured, and he himself was severely wounded. In consequence of this reverse, the main Chinese army, under General Ching, a brave but inexperienced officer, could not co-operate with Gordon against Quinsan, and it was then decided that Gordon himself should proceed against Taitsan, and read the triumphant foe at that place a lesson. It was computed that its garrison numbered 10,000 men, and that it had several European deserters and renegades among its leaders, while the total force under Gordon did not exceed 3000 men. Their recent successes had also inspired the Taepings with confidence, and, judging by the previous encounters, there seemed little reason to anticipate a satisfactory, or at least a speedy issue of the affair for the Imperialists. That the result was more favourable was entirely due to Gordon's military capacity and genius.

Major Gordon acted with remarkable and characteristic promptitude. He only heard of the catastrophe to San Tajin on 27th April; on 29th April, after two forced marches across country, he appeared before Taitsan, and captured a stockade in front of one of its gates. Bad weather prevented operations the next day, but on 1st May, Gordon having satisfied himself by personal examination that the western gate offered the best point of attack, began the bombardment soon after daybreak. Two stone stockades in front of the gate had first to be carried, and these, after twenty minutes' firing, were evacuated on part of Gordon's force threatening the retreat of their garrison back to the town. The capture of these stockades began and ended the operations on that day. The next morning Gordon stationed one regiment in front of the north gate to cut off the retreat of the garrison in that direction, and then resumed his main attack on the west gate. By this time he had been joined by some of his gunboats, and their fire, aided by the artillery he had with him, gradually made a good impression on the wall, especially after the guns had been drawn as near as 200 yards to it. The breach was then deemed sufficiently practicable; the gunboats went up the creek as near the walls as possible, and the two regiments advanced to the assault. The Taepings fought desperately in the breach itself, and no progress was made. It is probable that a reverse would have followed had not the howitzers continued to throw shells over the wall, thus inflicting heavy losses on the Taepings, who swarmed in their thousands behind. At that critical moment Gordon directed another regiment to escalade the wall at a point which the Taepings had left unguarded, and the appearance of these fresh troops on their flank at once decided the day, and induced the Taeping leaders to order a retreat. The Taepings lost heavily, but the loss of the Ever Victorious Army was in

proportion equally great. The latter had twenty men killed and 142 wounded, one European officer killed and six wounded. But the capture of Taitsan under all the circumstances was an exceptionally brilliant and decisive affair. With it may be said to have begun the military reputation of the young commander, whose admirable dispositions had retrieved a great disaster and inflicted a rude blow on the confidence of a daring enemy.

From Taitsan he marched to Quinsan; but his force was not yet thoroughly in hand, and wished to return to Sungkiang, in accordance with their practice under Ward of spending their pay and prize-money after any successful affair before attempting another. Gordon yielded on this occasion the more easily because he was impressed by the strength of Quinsan, and also because his ammunition had run short. But his trouble with his men was not yet over, and he had to face a serious mutiny on the part of his officers. For improved economy and efficiency Gordon appointed an English commissariat officer, named Cookesley, to control all the stores, and he gave him the rank of lieutenant-colonel. This gave umbrage to the majors in command of regiments, who presented a request that they should be allowed the higher rank and pay of lieutenant-colonel; and when this was refused they sent in their resignations, which were accepted. The affair was nearly taking a serious turn, as the troops refused to march; but Gordon's firmness overcame the difficulty. Two of the majors were reinstated, and the others dismissed, but this incident finally decided Gordon to change his headquarters from Sungkiang to some place where the bad traditions of Ward and Burgevine were not in force. The active operations now undertaken against Quinsan served to distract the attention of the men, and to strengthen their commander's influence over them. General Gordon's own description of this affair is well worth quoting:—

“The force arrived at their old camping ground near the east gate of Quinsan on the evening of 27th of May. General Ching had established some five or six very strong stockades at this place, and, thanks to the steamer *Hyson*, had been able to hold them against the repeated attacks of the rebels. The line of rebel stockades was not more than 800 yards from his position. The force encamped near the stockades; and at daybreak of the 28th the 4th and 5th Regiments, with the field artillery, moved to attack them. The right stockade was attacked in front, and its right flank turned, on seeing which the rebels retreated. They were in large force, and had it not been for the numerous bridges they had constructed in their rear, they would have suffered much, as the pursuit was pressed beyond the north gate close

stakes, and a general advance with the steamer and troops was made. The rebels stood for a minute, and then vacated the stockades and ran. The reason of the rebels defending these stockades so badly was on account of the ill-feeling between the chiefs in charge of Quinsan and Chunye, and the neglect of the former to furnish rice to the latter.

"The *Hyson* [with Gordon on board] now steamed up towards Soochow at a slow pace, owing to the innumerable boats that crowded the creek, which, vacated by their owners, were drifting about with their sails up in every direction. The rebels were in clusters along the bank, marching in an orderly way towards Soochow. The *Hyson* opened fire on them and hurried their progress, and, hanging on their rear, kept up a steady fire till they reached Ta Edin, where a large arch bridge spanned the creek, and where the rebels had constructed a splendid stone fort. We expected that the rebels would make a stand here, but they merely fired one shot, which was answered by a shell from the *Hyson*, which went into the embrasure, and the rebels continued their flight. It became rather hazardous to pass this fort and leave it unoccupied, with the number of armed rebels who were between Chunye and Ta Edin. The *Hyson*, moreover, had no force on board of any importance. There were with me five or six Europeans and some thirty Chinamen—gunners, etc. However, six of us landed, and held the fort somehow till more Imperialists came up, while the *Hyson* pushed on towards Soochow.

"The *Hyson* continued the pursuit, threading her way through the boats of all descriptions which crowded the creek, and harassing the rear of the rebel columns which extended along the road for over a mile. About two miles from Ta Edin another stone fort was passed without a shot being fired; this was Siaon Edin. Everything was left in the forts by the rebels. Soon after passing this place the steamer headed some 400 rebels, and Captain Davidson ran her into the bank, and took 150 of them prisoners on board the *Hyson*—rather a risk, considering the crew of that vessel and her size. Soon after this four horsemen were descried riding at full speed about a mile in rear of the steamer. They came up, passed the steamer amid a storm of bullets, and joined the rebel column. One of them was struck off his horse, but the others coolly waited for him, and one of them stopped and took him up behind him. They deserved to get off. About three miles further on another stockade of stone was passed at a broken bridge called Waiquaidong, and the pursuit was carried on to about three-quarters of a mile from Soochow. It was now getting late (6 P.M.), and we did not know if the rebels in our rear might not have occupied the stockades, in which case we should have had to find another route back. On our return we met

negotiations, when China derived much advantage from his energy, ability, and devotion to her cause. The storm then blew over, but the second affair was more serious. Li Hung Chang became remiss in his payment of the force, and on 25th July Gordon sent in his formal resignation. There is every reason to believe that at this moment Gordon was thoroughly sick of his command, and would willingly have returned to Europe. The difficulties with his own men, the want of co-operation, to say nothing of appreciation on the part of the Chinese authorities, had damped even his zeal in what he reiterated was the good cause of restoring peace and security to a suffering people; and in addition to these troubles he had to carry on a correspondence with anonymous writers, who made many baseless charges in the Shanghai and Hongkong papers of cruelty against the men under his command. The English General at Shanghai used all his influence, however, with the Chinese Governor to pay up the arrears, and with Gordon to retain the command, because, as he said, there was "no other officer who combined so many dashing qualities, let alone skill and judgment."

But the event that really decided Gordon to withdraw his resignation was the unexpected return of Burgevine. That adventurer had proceeded to Peking after his dismissal from the command, and obtained some support from the American minister in pressing his claims on the Chinese. He had been sent back to Shanghai with letters which, although they left some loophole of escape, might be interpreted as ordering Li Hung Chang to reinstate him in the command. This Li, supported by the English commanding officer at Shanghai, had resolutely refused to do, and the feud between the men became more bitter than ever. Burgevine remained in Shanghai and employed his time in selling the Taepings arms and ammunition. In this way he established secret relations with their chiefs, and seeing no chance of Imperial employment he was not unwilling to join his fortunes to theirs. This inclination was increased by the belief that he might be able to form a force of his own which would give a decisive turn to the struggle, and his vanity led him to think that he might pose on the rebel side as no unequal adversary of Gordon, to whom all the time he professed the greatest friendship. These feelings arose from or were certainly strengthened by the representations made by several of the officers and men whom Gordon had dismissed from his army. They easily led Burgevine to think that he was not forgotten, and that he had only to raise his standard to be joined by many of his old men.

A fortnight before Gordon's resignation Dr Macartney—who had

and the steamer *Kajow* proved of material value on water. Gordon found on his return, therefore, that the difficulties of the campaign were materially increased. His opponents were far stronger and more confident, while his own resources remained unchanged. Gordon tersely summed up the situation in an official despatch: "There is no knowing what an immense amount of damage might have been done if the rebels had had a more energetic man than Burgevine, and it would be as well not to point out the line which might have been taken."

The first engagements of this more difficult and keenly-contested phase of the campaign took place at Kahpoo, a place on the canal some miles south of Soochow. Gordon had taken it a week before he left for Shanghai, as a sort of parting gift to the Chinese, but when he arrived there on 9th August he found the garrison hard pressed, although the *Hyson* was stationed there—and indeed nothing but his arrival with a third steamer, the *Cricket*, averted its recapture. After five days' operations, that do not require description, the neighbourhood of Kahpoo was cleared of rebels, and Gordon returned to Quinsan, where the most essential task had to be accomplished of restoring the discipline of his own force. As some assistance in this difficult task General Brown lent him the services of 200 Beluches, whose admirable conduct and splendid appearance went far to restore a healthy spirit among his own men. At the same time these troops ensured the safety of Quinsan and also of Gordon himself, at least against the treachery of Burgevine's sympathisers.

The season of the year, the hottest and most trying of the long Chinese summer, compelled inaction, and Gordon felt doubly the need of caution now that he was brought face to face with the most arduous undertaking of the whole war, viz. the siege and capture of Soochow. General Ching's headquarters were at Ta Edin, and he had also occupied in force Waiquaidong, only two miles from the eastern gate of Soochow. Before the end of September he had pushed on still further, and erected his stockades within half a mile of that position. At this moment Gordon, anxious as to what might happen to his too-adventurous colleague, advanced with his force to his aid, and took up the supreme direction of the attack on Soochow. As usual, Gordon began by making a careful examination of the extensive rebel positions at and round Soochow, and the result of it was that he decided to capture the stockades and village of Patachiaou, one mile distant from the south wall of that city. His plan met with easy success, for the Taepings were not expecting an attack in that quarter, and offered little resistance.

Easily as they had been driven out of it, the Taepings made a very

he and Gordon should join bands, attack both Taepings and Imperialists, and fight for their own hand. This mad and unprincipled proposal excited Gordon's anger, but it was only Burgevine's old filibustering idea revived under unfavourable conditions. It was while smarting under this rebuff that Burgevine proposed to Captain Jones a fresh plot for entrapping Gordon, while he, unsuspecting evil, was engaged in conferences for their surrender ; but to Jones's credit, let it be stated that he refused to have any part in such black treachery. Thereupon Burgevine attempted to take Jones's life, either to conceal his own treachery or to enable him to carry out his interrupted plans. Much delay occurred in carrying out the project of Burgevine's desertion, and Gordon, rendered specially anxious to save his and the other foreigners' lives, because one party had escaped without Burgevine, wrote a strong letter on the subject to Mow Wang, Chung Wang's chief lieutenant. He also sent him a present of a pony, at which the rebel chief was so much pleased that he agreed to release Burgevine, and on 18th October that person appeared at the outworks of Gordon's position. His personal safety was entirely due to Gordon's humane efforts, and to the impression that officer had made on the Taepings as a chivalrous opponent. The American Consul at Shanghai, Mr Seward, officially thanked Major Gordon for his "great kindness to misguided General Burgevine and his men." Nearly two years later this adventurer met the fate he so narrowly escaped on several occasions. He had been forbidden by his own Consul as well as the Chinese Government ever to return to China, but in June 1865 he broke his parole. Before he could be arrested he met with his death by accident, being drowned when crossing a Chinese river, but rumours were prevalent that his death was an act of vengeance instigated by his old enemy the Futai, Li Hung Chang.

The assumption of the supreme command by Chung Wang was soon followed by those offensive operations which had made that dashing leader the most famous of all the rebel generals. Gordon and the bulk of his corps were at Patachiaou, south of Soochow—only General Ching and the Chinese army were north of that place—and he resolved to attack them and force his way through to Chanzu, which he wished to recover as opening a road to the river and the outer world. Gordon divined his intention, and for some time prevented him carrying it out by making threatening demonstrations with his gunboats on the western side of Soochow ; but his own attention was soon diverted to another part of the country where a new and unexpected danger threatened his own position and communications. A large rebel force, computed to number 20,000 men, had suddenly appeared behind Major Gordon's

these considerations to abandon the tempting idea of crushing Chung Wang and capturing the towns in the rear of Nanking, and to have recourse to safer if slower methods.

But if he had to abandon the larger plan, he still stuck tenaciously to his main idea that the way to capture Soochow was to isolate it, and above all to sever Chung Wang's communication with it. Several weeks passed before Gordon could complete the necessary arrangements, but at last, on 19th November, he left Leeku at the head of the greater part of his own force and a large contingent of Ching's braves to attack the stockades at Fusaiquan on the Grand Canal, about four miles north of Leeku. The Taeping position was a strong one, including eight separate earthworks, a stone fort, and several stockades. Gordon said "it was far the best built and strongest position he had yet seen," but the rebels evacuated it in the most cowardly manner without attempting the least resistance. Gordon goes on to say: "Our loss was none killed, and none wounded! We had expected a most desperate defence. If ever men deserved beheading, the Taeping leaders did on this occasion." The immediate consequence of this success was that Chung Wang quitted his camp in face of San Tajin, and, joining the Wusieh corps, concentrated his whole force for the defence of the Grand Canal.

Having thus strengthened his position towards the north, Gordon, very much to Ching's satisfaction, fell in with his views to begin a direct attack on Soochow itself. For good reasons it was decided that the north-east angle of Soochow was the weakest, but before it could be attacked it was necessary to capture the strong stockades which the rebels had erected in front of the East and North Gates. The East Gate, or Low Mun, stockades were selected for the first attack, and as the scene of a reverse to Ching's force on 14th October, the Chinese commander was specially anxious to capture them. They were exceedingly formidable, consisting of a line of breastwork, defended at intervals with circular stockades, and the position was well chosen and strongly fortified. After reconnoitring it, and obtaining all the information he could from deserters, Gordon determined on a night attack; but unfortunately not only were his plans revealed to the Taipings by traitors in his own camp, but his arrangements miscarried. As is often the case with night attacks, the plan of attack was not adhered to, and much confusion followed. The breastwork was carried by a small part of his troops, but the stockades in its rear were never reached. Encouraged by Gordon's example, who seemed to be at every point at the same moment, his men held on to the breastwork, but the supports would not move up, and when he hastened to the rear to encourage them, the Taipings under Mow Wang attacked in their turn and



to another part of his force to seize the Futai and hold him as a hostage for the safety of the Wangs. The interpreter was attacked on the way by Imperialists, who wounded him, and tore up Gordon's letters. When one of the Taeping guides brought back this news Gordon was allowed to leave himself for the same purpose; but he was arrested on the way by some Imperialists, detained for several hours, and the morning was far advanced before he was able to send back his bodyguard for the protection of Wangchi's house and family. He then moved a further force into the city, to prevent the massacre that the Imperialists seemed to be contemplating, and in this task he was gallantly seconded by Captain Bonnefoy and the Franco-Chinese contingent. Having taken these steps, Gordon waited near the Eastern Gate for all his steamers, with which he intended to seize the Futai, and make him give up the Wangs. At this moment General Ching approached him, but before he could begin his excuses, "he met with such a storm that he made a precipitate retreat into the city." Ching then sent an English officer, one of Gordon's own force, to explain matters, but he did not know whether the chiefs were alive or dead. He went on to say, however, that Lar Wang's son was in his tent, and on the boy being sent for, he said that his father had been executed on the opposite side of the creek. The steamers had still not arrived, and Gordon asked one of his lieutenants, Prince F. von Wittgenstein, to cross the creek in his boat and report what he saw. He returned with the intelligence that there were nine headless bodies. Gordon then crossed himself, and identified Lar Wang and several of his companions. There was consequently no further doubt as to what had happened, or anything left for Gordon to do than to secure them decent burial. Having done this he abandoned his trip to the Taiho Lake, and hastened to Quinsan.

The exact mode of this assassination seems to have been as follows: When the Wangs came out of the city they were met by General Ching, who did not, however, accompany them to the Futai Li Hung Chang. That official received them in a stockade near his boat, some conversation ensued, and then Li left the stockade. Here again reference should be made to the authoritative narrative that follows. A party of Imperial troops closed the gates, seized the Wangs, and at once beheaded them. Li Hung Chang very soon afterwards left his quarters for a different and remote part of the Imperial camp.

This treacherous act, although quite in accordance with Chinese traditions, was generally denounced at the time, and has excited much discussion since. Major Gordon certainly felt it very keenly, for he considered that his word had been pledged as much as the Chinese

commander's for the safety of the leaders who surrendered. It has been shown how energetically he acted once he suspected that anything was wrong, but it seems as if it were going too far to say that he thought for a moment of exacting a summary revenge on the person of Li Hung Chang. Sir Henry Gordon, writing with at least a sense of responsibility, says on this point: "It is not the fact that Major Gordon sought the Futai with the intention of shooting him. It is a complete misrepresentation to say he did so. It is true he endeavoured unsuccessfully to have an explanation with him, but not of the nature asserted." But it must also be reaffirmed that as long as Gordon thought he could save the Wangs' lives he was prepared to secure the person of Li Hung Chang and hold him as a hostage for their safety. Of that, at least, there can be no question.

I must now ask the reader to return to the point when Gordon and Dr Macartney were standing on the wall near the Low Mun Gate, in order that the following important and authoritative narrative may be understood. General Ching entered by this gate at the head of a party of his troops, and Gordon, somewhat uneasy at the signs of commotion he thought he had detected across the creek, at once addressed him, asking—"Well, how did it go off? Have the Wangs seen the Futai?"

Taken off his guard, or confused between the sudden question and his own knowledge of what had occurred, Ching quickly replied, "They have not seen the Futai."

"What!" replied Gordon, equally hastily; "that must be nonsense. I saw the Wangs myself ride out of the city to the rendezvous, and spoke to them."

Ching then corrected himself by saying, "Oh, yes, that is all right, but they have not shaved their heads, and they want to retain half the city," the western half, that nearest to the relieving force, still at a considerable distance from Soochow, under the heroic Chung Wang.

To which Gordon at once responded, "That won't do. They must conform with what has been agreed upon," and turning to Macartney, he said, "Will you go to the Lar Wang's palace and tell him that this cannot be, and meet me afterwards at Wuliungchow, where I am to join the steamer *Hyson* to go on the Taiho Lake?"

Macartney at once accepted the mission, and proceeded to the Lar Wang's palace, but before following him thither it is necessary to refer to two earlier passages, one known and the other up to this moment unknown, in the relations of General Gordon and Sir Halliday Macartney.

The passage which is known is that where Macartney, sent as the

hend any personal unpleasantness with one who had given the clearest proof of friendship and esteem. As I cannot give the full text of the original letter from General Gordon, I content myself by stating that its two principal passages were that Li Hung Chang should at once resign his post of Governor of Kiangsu, and give up the seals of office to Gordon, so that he might put them in commission until the Emperor's pleasure should be ascertained; or that, failing that step, Gordon would forthwith proceed to attack the Imperialists, and to retake from them all the places captured by the Ever Victorious Army, for the purpose of handing them back again to the Taepings. When Gordon went so far as to write a letter of that character, which, it must be admitted, was far in excess of any authority he possessed, it must be clear that the envoy, who came to put forward counsels that were intended to restore harmony, but that by so doing might assume the aspect of palliating the Futai's conduct, could not count on a very cordial reception from a man of Gordon's temperament, whose sense of honour and good faith had been deeply injured by the murder of the rebel leaders.

Still, Sir Halliday accepted the mission without hesitation, and hastened to carry it out without delay. It was late in the day when he saw Li Hung Chang, but having procured a native boat with several rowers, he set off in the evening, and reached Quinsan in the middle of the night. Gordon was then in bed and could not be disturbed, and while Macartney waited he drank some coffee Gordon's servant made for him, which he much needed, as he had left Soochow without having broken his fast during the whole day. After a short time, and before day had really broken, Gordon sent down word that he would see him, and Macartney went upstairs to an ill-lighted room, where he found Gordon sitting on his bedstead. He found Gordon sobbing, and before a word was exchanged, Gordon stooped down, and taking something from under the bedstead, held it up in the air, exclaiming:

"Do you see that? Do you see that?"

The light through the small Chinese windows was so faint that Macartney had at first some difficulty in recognising what it was, when Gordon again exclaimed:

"It is the head of the Lar Wang, foully murdered!" and with that burst into hysterical tears.

At once perceiving that any conversation under these circumstances would do no good, Macartney said he would retire and see Gordon later. Some hours afterwards breakfast was served in a large room downstairs, where there were present not only many of the officers, but also several European merchants and traders of Shanghai, who had been

cation, but that if he might publish Gordon's own letter offering to do this in the *North China Herald*, he would be satisfied, and the matter, as far as he was concerned, might be considered at an end. To this course Gordon at once acquiesced, subject to the omission of one paragraph affecting a third person, and in no respect relating to Sir Halliday or his conduct. This letter, which the Editor of that paper stated he "published at Colonel Gordon's request," on 23rd July 1864, read as follows :—

"SHANGHAI, July 5, 1864.

"MY DEAR MACARTNEY,—It is with much regret that I perceive in the last Blue Book issued on China affairs a Report from me to General Brown on the occurrences at Soochow, which report contains an injurious remark on your conduct.

"I am extremely sorry that I ever penned that remark, as I believe you went out of your way on this occasion wholly on the same public grounds which led eventually to my taking the field myself, and I can only excuse my having done so by recollecting the angry feelings with which I was actuated at that time.

"It will be my duty to rectify this error in other quarters, and in the meantime I beg you to make what use you may think fit of this letter.—  
Yours truly,  
C. G. GORDON."

On the next day Gordon and Macartney met at breakfast at the yamen of the Futai Li Hung Chang, and Gordon at once came up to Macartney and said :

"Do not let us talk of the past, but of the future. I am one of those who hold that when a man has wronged another he should seek opportunities through his life of making him redress. Now you are founding an Arsenal at Soochow, and I am going back to England, where I have a brother in the Arsenal at Woolwich. From him I can get you books, plans, and useful information. I will do so."

Gordon was as good as his word. He sent Macartney expensive plans and books, besides most valuable information. He also promised to write to the Duke of Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief, admitting that he was not justified in his criticism of Dr Macartney, who had acted in every way becoming an English gentleman and officer. Thus ended the misunderstanding between the two Englishmen who rendered China the best service she has ever obtained from foreigners ; and knowing both these distinguished men intimately, I have much pleasure in testifying from my own knowledge to the accuracy of the following statement of Sir Halliday Macartney to myself that "after this, Gordon and I remained firm friends evermore."

Gordon's indignation at this outrage did not soon subside, and three weeks after it happened an opportunity presented itself for showing and perhaps relieving his mind. A high Chinese officer presented himself at

his quarters at Quinsan to announce the receipt of an Imperial decree and presents from Peking as a reward for his share in the capture of Soochow. Gordon at once said that he would not accept the presents, and that they were not to be brought to him. The Chinese officer replied that they should not be brought, but that the emissary of the Emperor ought to be received. To this Gordon assented, and on 1st January 1864 he went down to receive him at the West Gate. On arriving there he met a procession carrying a number of open boxes, containing 10,000 taels (then about £3000 of our money) in Sycee shoes, laid on red cloth, also four Snake flags taken from the Taepings—two sent by Li Hung Chang, and two by another mandarin who had had no part in the Soochow affair. Gordon made the procession turn about and take the whole lot back again. He wrote his reply stating his reason on the back of the Imperial rescript itself; he rejected Li Hung Chang's flags, but he accepted the other two as being in no sense associated with the disgrace of the Taeping massacre. In this manner did Gordon show the Chinese what he thought of their conduct. His characteristic reply to the Imperial rescript read as follows :—

“Major Gordon receives the approbation of His Majesty the Emperor with every gratification, but regrets most sincerely that, owing to the circumstance which occurred since the capture of Soochow, he is unable to receive any mark of H.M. the Emperor's recognition, and therefore respectfully begs His Majesty to receive his thanks for his intended kindness, and to allow him to decline the same.”

At this moment it will be recollected that Gordon was, strictly speaking, no longer in command. He had resigned, because his very reasonable demand for a gratuity to his troops had not been complied with. But circumstances were too strong for him, and a number of considerations, all highly creditable to his judgment and single-mindedness, induced him to sink his private grievances, and to resume the command on grounds of public policy and safety. The internal condition of the Ever Victorious Army itself, which inaction had brought to the verge of mutiny, was the determining fact that induced Gordon to resume the command, even at the price of meeting Li Hung Chang and sinking his differences with him. There had been much intrigue among the officers of the force as to who should succeed Gordon in the command, if he persisted in his resolve to give it up, and before tranquillity was restored sixteen of the agitating officers had to be dismissed. The force itself welcomed the formal resumption of the command by Gordon, and not the less because it signified a return to active operations after more than two months' inaction. The murder of the Wangs took place on 7th December 1863; it was on 18th February

tions, Kintang had no outer defences. It presented the appearance of a small compact city with a stone wall. No flags were shown; the place might have been deserted, but the complete silence seemed ominous. Gordon selected his point of attack, and began a bombardment, which continued during three hours, and then he ordered the assault. As the bugles sounded the advance, the Taepings appeared for the first time on the walls, and received the assailants with a heavy fire. At this critical moment Gordon received a severe wound below the knee, and had to be carried to his boat. His place was taken by Major Brown, brother of the General commanding at Shanghai, who advanced waving Gordon's own flag, but he too received a severe wound, and was carried off the field. The rebels fought with great desperation, and Gordon, who remained conscious, sent orders from his boat for the discontinuance of the attack. The loss was heavy—two officers killed, eleven wounded, and 115 rank and file killed and wounded. Gordon, notwithstanding his wound, would have renewed the attack, but for the receipt of alarming intelligence from his rear. Li Hung Chang wrote that the Taepings had turned the flank of his brother's army, and captured Fushan. They were at that moment besieging Chanzu, and had carried terror into the very heart of the Imperial position. Gordon's wound—the only one of any severity he ever received—excited much sympathy among the Chinese, and was made the subject of an Imperial edict ordering Li Hung Chang to call on him daily, and "requesting Gordon to wait until he shall be perfectly restored to health and strength."

In the extremity to which he was reduced, the brilliant idea had occurred to Chung Wang to assume the offensive at a point most remote from the scene where Gordon was acting in person. Hence the sudden and successful attack on Fushan, and his strategy was rewarded by the paralysis it produced in the Imperial plans. Gordon at once hastened back to Liyang, where he left a strong garrison, and taking only 1000 men, half of whom were the irregular Taeping contingent raised at Liyang itself, proceeded by forced marches to Wusieh. As the late Sir George Chesney well said, it is impossible to decide whether the temerity or the confidence of the young wounded commander was the more calculated to excite wonder. On arriving here, he found that nothing worse had happened than what had been already reported, while in the south, beyond his sphere of operations, the important city of Hangchow had been evacuated by the Taepings; and with this loss another avenue for obtaining arms and ammunition was closed to them.

The relief of Kongyin, which was hard pressed, was the first task Gordon set himself; and as he could not leave his boat on account

of his wound, the conduct of operations was attended with much difficulty. After obtaining several minor successes, and approaching to within a few miles of Kongyin, Gordon found it necessary to completely alter his plans, and to attack the Taepings in their headquarters at Waisso, before relieving the former place. He accordingly proceeded to Waisso with his artillery on board the flotilla, and his infantry marching by land. The latter, carried away by some trifling successes, attacked the Waisso stockades without his orders, and even without his knowledge; and having invited a reverse by their rashness and disobedience, rendered it complete by an inexcusable panic, during which the Taeping cavalry, not more than 100 strong, rode through the best regiment of the force; the rebels, carrying a sword in each hand, cut down the fugitives right and left. The pursuit lasted for three miles, and 7 European officers killed, 1 wounded, 252 men killed, and 62 wounded, represented the heavy loss in this disastrous affair. The survivors, many of whom had thrown away their arms, were so panic-stricken that Gordon had to retire, and to summon up fresh troops.

For this disaster Gordon held the officers, and not the men, to be blameworthy. They led the men into a false position, and then did not make the proper movements. If the men had only formed square, Gordon wrote, it would have been all right with them. After this Gordon waited to allow of his wound being thoroughly cured, and on 6th April he again appeared before Waisso. A large Imperial force also enveloped the place on all sides but one, which had been left apparently open and unguarded in the hope that the garrison would use it as a means of reaching a place of safety. The Imperialists had, however, broken all the bridges along this route, so that the Taepings would soon encounter serious difficulties to their progress, and admit of their being taken at a great disadvantage. Gordon approached the place with much caution, and he found it so strongly fortified on the south side, opposite his line of approach, that he moved round to the north in search of a more favourable point of attack. This simple manœuvre so disconcerted the Taepings that they abandoned several of their stockades, which Gordon promptly seized; and finding that these in turn commanded others, he succeeded in carrying the whole of a most formidable position with little or no loss. The Taeping garrison fled in confusion and suffered heavily at the hands of the Imperial troops. It rallied on the camp before Kongyin, and the day after this success Gordon marched from Waisso to attack them. The Taepings were thoroughly disorganised, and apparently amazed at the number of their opponents, for the whole of the population rose against them in revenge for the outrages they had perpetrated. There was only one action, and

West Gate, and carried them by a heavy and unnecessary loss of life. Their defenders, instead of retreating into Chanchufu, fled northwards to their next possession, at Tayan. The same night part of the garrison left behind made a *sortie*, but Gordon was apprised of it, and it was easily repulsed. The next day he captured all the stockades on the southern, or, more correctly, the western side of the Canal, but the Taepings still held a strong stone fort on the opposite side, which defied all the efforts of the Imperialists. Two hundred of the Liyang corps gallantly crossed the Canal in boats, forced open the back door of the fort, and carried it at a rush. With this success all the outworks of Chanchufu were taken, and the town itself closely besieged. Gordon then proceeded to plant his batteries opposite the point he had selected for attack, but a regrettable affair happened in the night, when the picket on guard fired into the party working at the battery, and killed Colonel Tapp, an excellent officer who commanded the artillery of the force. This mishap was quickly followed by others. The Imperialists under their own generals wished to get all the credit of the capture, and attacked several times on their own side, but always without obtaining any advantage. Nor was Gordon himself more fortunate. After a severe bombardment, to which the Taepings made no reply, Gordon assaulted on 27th April. His men succeeded in throwing two pontoons across the ditch, twenty yards wide, and some of his officers reached the wall; but the Taepings met them boldly with a terrific storm of fire-balls, bags of powder, stinkpots, and even showers of bricks. Twice did Gordon lead his men to the assault, but he had to admit his repulse with the loss of his pontoons, and a great number of his best officers and men. Ten officers killed and 19 wounded, 40 men killed and 260 wounded, represented the cost of this disastrous failure.

Undaunted by this defeat, Gordon proceeded to lay siege in regular form, and Li Hung Chang lent him the services of his own troops in order to dig the necessary trenches. Working only at night, and with equal celerity and secrecy, a succession of trenches were made right up to the edge of the ditch. At the same time, proclamations in large characters were exhibited, offering terms to all who came over, except the Wang in command; and many desertions took place. At last, on 11th May, the place was again assaulted, this time at mid-day; and owing to the short distance from the advance trench to the breach, the Chinese troops of all kinds were able to come to close fighting with the Taepings without any preliminary loss. The Taepings fought with great courage, even although their chief Hoo Wang was taken prisoner early in the fight, but at last they were overwhelmed by numbers. Hoo Wang and all the Canton and Kwangsi men—that is to say, the original Taeping



gun drill very fairly. This is so far satisfactory, and I think, if the whole country was not corrupt, they might go on well and quickly, but really it is most irritating to see the jealousies of the mandarins of one another. The people are first-rate, hard-working, and fairly honest ; but it seems as soon as they rise in office they become corrupt. There is lots of vitality in the country, and there are some good men ; but these are kept down by the leaden apathy of their equals, who hate to see reform, knowing their own deficiencies."

By the end of November Gordon was able to think of returning home, as he had given a start to military reform in China ; but before he sailed he had to receive a congratulatory address from the most prominent citizens and merchants of Shanghai, expressing their "appreciation and admiration of his conduct." They had not always been so discriminating, and at the beginning their sympathies had been for the Taepings, or at least for strict non-intervention. The Chinese Government also gave exceptional signs of its gratitude to the noble-minded soldier, who had rendered it such invaluable aid. It again offered him a large sum of money, which was declined with as much firmness, although less emphasis, as on the earlier occasion. But he could not reject the promotion offered him to the high rank of Ti-Tu, or Field Marshal in the Chinese army, or churlishly refuse to receive the rare and high dignity of the Yellow Jacket. The English reader has been inclined on occasion to smile and sneer at that honour, but its origin was noble, and the very conditions on which it was based ensured that the holders should be very few in number.

The story of its origin will admit of being retold. When the Manchus conquered China, in the middle of the seventeenth century, they received material aid from a Chinese soldier named Wou Sankwei. He was rewarded with the Viceroyalty of the whole of south-western China, in which region he became supreme. After many years the Manchus thought he posed with too great an air of independence, and he was summoned to Peking to give an account of his stewardship. But Wou Sankwei was too old to be caught by so simple a ruse. He defied the Manchus, and established his authority throughout the larger part of the country south of the Great River. The young and afterwards illustrious Emperor Kanghi threw himself into the struggle with ardour, and it continued for many years, and devastated almost as large an area as did the Taeping rebellion. Kanghi did not obtain a decisive triumph until after the death of Wou Sankwei, when he bestowed a yellow riding jacket and an ornament of peacock's feathers for the cap on his principal lieutenants. He also decreed that this decoration should be made a regular order, to be conferred only on

speculation, but there seems little or no doubt that it was at least compiled under Gordon's own direction, from the reports of his lieutenants in China, and completed during his residence at Gravesend.

Of the true personal journal Gordon wrote in 1864: "I do not want the same published, as I think, if my proceedings sink into oblivion, it would be better for every one; and my reason for this is that it is a very contested point whether we ought to have interfered or not, on which point I am perfectly satisfied that it was the proper and humane course to pursue, but I still do not expect people who do not know much about it to concur in the same. . . . I never want anything published. I am sure it does no good, and makes people chary of writing."

The same feeling came out in his last letter to his mother from China, 17th November 1864: "The individual is coming home, but does not wish it known, for it would be a signal for the disbanded to come to Southampton, and although the waits at Christmas are bad, these others are worse." Such a wish as this was impossible of gratification. The public press could not be silenced by the modesty of this retiring commander whose deeds had been so heroic and devoid of selfish purpose. The papers became so filled with accounts of his achievements that he gave up reading them, but *The Times* had at least crystallised the opinion of the day into a single sentence: "Never did soldier of fortune deport himself with a nicer sense of military honour, with more gallantry against the resisting, and with more mercy towards the vanquished, with more disinterested neglect of opportunities of personal advantage, or with more entire devotion to the objects and desires of his own Government, than this officer who, after all his victories, has just laid down his sword."

The more calmly and critically the deeds of the Ever Victorious Army and Gordon's conduct during the campaign against the Taepings are considered, the greater will be the credit awarded to the high-minded, brave, and unselfish man who then gained the sobriquet of "Chinese" Gordon. Among all the deeds of his varied and remarkable career he never succeeded in quite the same degree in winning fame and in commanding success. At Khartoum the eyes of the world were on him, but the Mahdi was allowed to remain victorious, and the Soudan still awaits fresh conquest. But during the two Taeping campaigns he was completely successful, and closed his work with an unqualified triumph. It was also the only occasion when he led an army in the field, and proved his claims to be considered a great commander. Of serious warfare it may be said to have been his last experience, for his own Government was very careful to give him no

active military employment—garrison, and even consular duties being deemed more suitable for this victorious leader than the conduct of any of those little expeditions commencing with the Red River and Ashanti for which he was pre-eminently qualified—and under the Khedive he controlled an army without finding a real foe. Gordon's title to rank among skilful military commanders rests on his conduct at the head of the Ever Victorious Army during the Taeping war. It has earned the praise of many competent military authorities as well as the general admiration of the public, and Lord Wolseley must have had it in his mind when, in vindicating his sanity, he exclaimed that he "wished other English generals had been bitten with his madness."

Those who have thought that Gordon won his victories in China by sheer personal gallantry, and nothing else, have taken a very shallow view of the case, and not condescended to study the details. In his general conception of the best way to overcome the Taepings he was necessarily hampered by the views, wishes, jealousies, and self-seeking purposes of his Chinese colleagues. But for them, his strategy would have been of a very different character, as he himself often said. He had to adjust his means to the best attainable end, and it must be allowed that he did this with remarkable tact and patience—the very qualities in which he was naturally most deficient. If we consider his strategy as being thus fettered by the Chinese officials Li Hung Chang and General Ching, whose first object was not so much the overthrow of the Taeping Government as the expulsion of the Taepings from the province for which they were responsible, it will be admitted that nothing could be better than his conception of what had to be done, and how it was to be effected. The campaign resolved itself into the cutting off of all their sources of supply from the sea and Treaty ports, and the shutting up of their principal force within the walls of Soochow. How well and successfully that was accomplished has been narrated, but a vainglorious commander could not have been held back after the fall of Chanchufu from leading his victorious force to achieve a crowning triumph at Nanking, which Gordon could easily have carried by assault before the order in council withdrawing his services came into effect.

More frequent opportunity was afforded for Gordon to reveal his tactical skill than his strategical insight, and in this respect the only trammels he experienced were from the military value and efficiency of his force, which had its own limitations. But still it would be unjust to form too poor an estimate of the fighting efficiency and courage of either Gordon's force or his Taeping opponents from the miserable exhibition the Chinese recently made of themselves during

touching misfortune. When any outside subject of national suffering appealed to his heart or touched his fancy, he would consequently have no means available of sending any help, and this was specially the case during the suffering of the Lancashire operatives after the close of the American Civil War. On that occasion he defaced the gold medal given him by the Chinese Empresses, and sent it anonymously to the fund, which benefited from it to the extent of £10; but, as has been already stated, he made this sacrifice with the greatest pain and reluctance.

Gordon's love of children, and especially of boys, was quite remarkable. He could enter into their feelings far better than he could into those of grown men, and the irritability which he could scarcely suppress even among his friends was never displayed towards them. He was always at their service, anxious to amuse them, and to minister to their rather selfish whims. Some accidental remark led his class to express a wish to visit the Zoo. Gordon at once seized the idea, and said they should do so. He made all the arrangements as carefully as if he were organising a campaign. His duties prevented his going himself, but he saw them off at the station, under the charge of his assistant, and well provided with baskets of food for their dinner and refreshment on their journey. Of course he defrayed the whole expense, and on their return he gave them a treat of tea and strawberries. He also thought of their future, being most energetic in procuring them employment, and anxious in watching their after-career.

For some reason that is not clear he called these boys his "kings." He probably used it in the sense that they were his lieutenants, and he borrowed his imagery from the "Wangs," or kings of the Taeping ruler. I am told, however, that he really used the word in a spiritual sense, testifying that these boys were as kings in the sight of God. He followed the course of the first voyage of those who went to sea, sticking pins in a map to show the whereabouts of their respective vessels. It is not astonishing that his pupils should have felt for him a special admiration and affection. He not merely supplied all their wants, but he endeavoured to make them self-reliant, and to raise them above the sordid and narrow conditions of the life to which they were either born or reduced by the improvidence or misfortune of their parents. Of course Gordon was often deceived, and his confidence and charity abused; but these cases were, after all, the smaller proportion of the great number that passed through his hands. He sometimes met with gross ingratitude, like that of the boy whom he found starving, in rags, and ill with disease, and whom he restored to health, and perhaps to self-respect, and then sent back to his parents in Norfolk. But neither

comply with his request to be attached to the Abyssinian expedition, but they were willing enough to do him what in official circles was thought to be a very good turn when they could. The English membership of the Danubian Commission became vacant, and it was remembered that in his early days Gordon had taken part in the delimitation negotiations which had resulted in the formation of that body. The post carried with it the good pay of £2000 a year, as some compensation for the social and sanitary drawbacks and disadvantages of life in that region, and it was offered to Gordon, who accepted it. It cut short his philanthropical labours, but it drew him back into that current of active work for which he was already pining. He therefore accepted it, and having presented some of the Snake flags of the old Taeping Wangs to the local school in which he had toiled as a simple teacher, he left Gravesend quietly, and without any manifestation that it had lost its principal resident. Having mentioned the Snake flags, it is proper to add that the principal of these, including some of his own, which were shot to ribbons, were left by General Gordon to his sister, the late Miss Gordon, who in her turn presented them, with the Yellow Jacket and its appendages, the chief mandarin dress, etc., to the Royal Engineers at Chatham. The Gravesend life closed with a notice in the local journal, from which the following extract may be made; but once a year the old flags that led the advance or retreat of the Chinese rebels are brought out from their cases and flaunted before the Gravesend scholars as the memorial of a brave and unselfish leader and teacher.

The farewell article in the local paper read as follows:—

“Our readers, without exception, will learn with regret of the departure of Lieut.-Colonel Gordon, R.E., C.B., from the town in which he has resided for six years, gaining a name by the most exquisite charity that will long be remembered. Nor will he be less missed than remembered in the lowly walks of life, by the bestowal of gifts, by attendance and administration on the sick and dying, by the kindly giving of advice, by attendance at the Ragged School, Workhouse, and Infirmary—in fact, by general and continued beneficence to the poor, he has been so unwearied in well-doing that his departure will be felt by many as a personal calamity. There are those who even now are reaping the rewards of his kindness. His charity was essentially charity, and had its root in deep philanthropic feeling and goodness of heart, shunning the light of publicity, but coming even as the rain in the night-time, that in the morning is noted not, but only the flowers bloom, and give a greater fragrance. . . . All will wish him well in his new sphere, and we have less hesitation in penning these lines from the fact

I had with Nubar Pasha at our Embassy at Constantinople. This was twelve months ago. The next thing was a telegram a month ago. I have not determined what to do, but the Government have no objection."

He was not long, however, in making up his mind, and early in 1874 he was *en route* for Alexandria. One characteristic act in connection with his appointment deserves mention. The Khedive fixed his salary at £10,000 a year, but Gordon absolutely refused to accept more than £2000 a year—the same sum as he received for his post on the Danube. Various reasons have been given for this decision, but there is no ground for supposing that it was due to such a very narrow-minded prejudice as "that he would take nothing from a heathen." If he ever used these words, they must have been intended as a joke, and are not to be accepted seriously. A sufficient explanation of his decision is, that he had a supreme disdain for money, and the sum offered seemed far in excess of the post and work he had to perform. To have received £10,000 a year would have added immensely to his worries. He would not have known what to do with it, and the voluntary cutting of his salary relieved him of a weight of responsibility. Perhaps also he was far-seeing enough to realise that he would be less the mere creature of the Egyptian ruler with the smaller than with the larger salary, while he could gratify his own inner pride that no one should say that any sordid motive had a part in his working for semi-civilized potentates, whether Chinese or Mussulmen.

I am able to describe Gordon's exact feelings on this point in his own words. "My object is to show the Khedive and his people that gold and silver idols are not worshipped by all the world. They are very powerful gods, but not so powerful as *our* God. From whom does all this money come? from poor miserable creatures who are ground down to produce it. Of course these ideas are outrageous. Pillage the Egyptians is still the cry."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FIRST NILE MISSION.

A BRIEF description of the conquest by Mehemet Ali and his successors of the Soudan—a name signifying nothing more than “the land of the blacks”—and of the events which immediately preceded the appointment of Gordon, is necessary to show the extent of the work intrusted to him, and the special difficulties with which he had to contend.

It was in 1819 that the great Pasha or Viceroy Mehemet Ali, still in name the lieutenant of the Sultan, ordered his sons Ismail and the more famous Ibrahim to extend his authority up the Nile, and conquer the Soudan. They do not seem to have experienced any difficulty in carrying out their instructions. Nobody was interested in defending the arid wastes of that region. The Egyptian yoke promised to be as light as any other, and a few whiffs of grape-shot dispersed the only adversaries who showed themselves. Ibrahim, who soon took the lead, selected Khartoum as the capital of the new province, in preference to Shendy, which had formerly been regarded as the principal place in the country. In this he showed excellent judgment, for Khartoum occupies an admirable position in the fork of the two branches of the Nile; and whatever fate may yet befall the region in which the Mahdi and his successor the Khalifa have set up their ephemeral authority, it is destined by Nature to be the central point and capital of the vast region between the Delta and the Equatorial Lakes.

Khartoum lies on the left bank of the Blue Nile—Bahr-el-Azrak—rather more than three miles south of its confluence with the White Nile—Bahr-el-Abiad—at the northern point of the Isle of Tuti. The channel south of that island affords a slightly nearer approach to the White Nile, coming out immediately opposite the fortified camp of Omdurman, which the Mahdi made his headquarters and capital after the famous siege of 1884. There was nothing attractive or imposing about Khartoum. It contained 3000 mud houses, and one more pretentious building in the Governor's official residence or palace, known as the Hukumdariaha. It is surrounded by a wall and ditch, except where the Blue Nile supplies the need; and its western wall is not more

fully alive to the danger that might arise to his own position if a powerful military confederacy, under a capable chief, were ever organised in the Soudan. Instead of allying himself with the Darfourians, as would probably have been the more politic course, Ismail decided to invade their territory simultaneously with Zebehr. Several battles were fought, and one after another the Sultans of Darfour, whose dynasty had reigned for 400 years, were overthrown and slain. Zebehr received in succession the Turkish titles of Bey and Pasha, but he was not satisfied, for he said that as he had done all the fighting, he ought to receive the Governor-Generalship of Darfour. If he failed to win that title from the Khedive, he succeeded in gratifying a more profitable desire, by leading off into slavery the larger half of the population of Darfour. He was still engaged in this pursuit at the time of Gordon's appearance on the scene, and the force at his disposal was thus described by that officer: "Smart, dapper-looking fellows, like antelopes, fierce, unsparing, the terror of Central Africa, having a prestige far beyond that of the Government—these are the slave-dealers' tools," and afterwards they no doubt became the main phalanx of the Mahdi's military system.

The financial position of the Egyptian Government in the Soudan was as bad as the military and political. The Khedive's Governor-General at Khartoum, Ismail Yakoob Pasha, was nominally responsible for the administration of Darfour, although Zebehr reaped all the gain. This arrangement resulted in a drain on the Khedive's exchequer of £50,000 a year. The revenue failed to meet the expenditure in the other departments, and this was mainly due to the fact that the slavers no longer paid toll or tithe in the only trade that they had allowed to exist in the Soudan. What share of the human traffic they parted with was given in the way of bribes, and found no place in the official returns. All the time that this drain continued the Khedive was in a constant state of apprehension as to the danger which might arise to him in the south. He was also in receipt of frequent remonstrances from the English and other Governments as to the iniquities of the slave-trade, for which he was primarily in no sense to blame. On the other hand, he derived no benefit from the Soudan; and if he thought he could have obtained a secure frontier at Abou Hamid, or even at Wadi Halfa, he would have resigned all the rest without a sigh. But it was his strong conviction that no such frontier was attainable, and Ismail clung to his nominal and costly authority over the Soudan in the hope that some improvement might be effected, or that, in the chapter of accidents, the unexpected might come to his aid.

Alarmed as to his own position, in view of the ambition of Zebehr, and harassed by the importunities of England, Ismail, acting on the



passenger plants can pass through the outlet, while plenty come in at the upper end of the lake ; these eventually fill up all the passages which may have been made."

Gordon had the control of seven steamers, and in one of these he left Khartoum on 22nd March for the Upper Nile. He had already issued his first decree as Governor of the Equator, in which he declared the sale of ivory to be a Government monopoly, and forbade the importation of firearms and ammunition. It was while he was on this journey that he heard some birds—a kind of stork—laughing on the banks of the river. In his letters to his sister, which were to stand in the place of a diary, he facetiously remarks that he supposes they were amused at the idea of anyone being so foolish as to go up the Nile in "the hope of doing anything." But Gordon was not to be discouraged. Already he liked his work, amid the heat and mosquitoes day and night all the year round, and already he was convinced that he could do a good deal to ameliorate the lot of the unfortunate people. He reached Gondokoro on 16th April, where not only was he not expected, but he found them ignorant even of his appointment. He remained there only a few days, as he perceived he could do nothing without his stores, still *en route* from Cairo, and returned to Khartoum, which he reached in eleven days.

This brief trip satisfied him of several simple facts bearing on the situation in the Equatorial Province which the Khedive had sent him with such a flourish of trumpets to govern. He found very easily that the Egyptian Government possessed no practical authority in that region. Beyond the two forts at Gondokoro—garrison 300 men—and Fatiko—garrison 200 men—the Khedive had no possessions, and there was not even safety for his representatives half a mile from their guns. As Gordon said: "The Khedive gave me a Firman as Governor-General of the Equator, and left me to work out the rest." He began the practical part of his task on the occasion of this return to Khartoum by insisting that the accounts of the Equatorial Province should be kept distinct from those of the Soudan, and also that Ragouf Pasha, sent nominally to assist but really to hinder him, should be withdrawn.

Having asserted his individuality after several rows with Ismail Yakoob, he became impatient at the delayed arrival of his stores and staff, and hastened off to Berber to hurry their progress. As he was fond of saying, "Self is the best officer," and his visit to Berber hastened the arrival of the supplies which were necessary for his subsequent operations. His staff consisted of Colonel Long, of the United States Army, who had accompanied him to Gondokoro and been left there; Major Campbell, Egyptian Staff; Mr Kemp, an engineer; M. Linant,

It was based on justice and reason, and in the long-run constituted sound policy. He paid for what he took, and when he used the natives to drag his boats, or to clear tracks through the grassy zone fringing the Nile, he always carefully handed over to them cows, dhooira, or money, as an equivalent for their work. On the other hand, he was not less prompt to punish hostile tribes by imposing taxes on them, and, when unavoidable, inflicting punishment as well. But the system averted, as far as possible, the necessity of extreme measures, and in this the first period of his rule in the Soudan he had few hostile collisions with the natives of the country. Indeed, with the exception of the Bari tribe, who entrapped Linant, Gordon's best lieutenant after Gessi, and slew him with a small detachment, Gordon's enemies in the field proved few and insignificant. Even the Baris would not have ventured to attack him but for the acquaintance with, and contempt of, firearms they had obtained during an earlier success over an Egyptian corps.

There is no doubt that this absence of any organised opposition was fortunate, for the so-called troops at the disposal of the Governor of the Equator were as miserably inefficient and contemptible, from a fighting point of view, as any General Gordon ever commanded; and at a later stage of his career he plaintively remarked that it had fallen to his lot to lead a greater number of cowardly and unwarlike races than anyone else. But it was not merely that they were such poor fighters that Gordon declared that three natives would put a company to flight, but they were so disinclined for any work, and so encumbered by their women and children, that their ability to make any military show might be as safely challenged as their combative spirit. Well might Gordon write: "I never had less confidence in any troops in my life." But even these shortcomings were not the worst. The Arab soldiers provided by the Egyptian Government, and sent up over and over again, in spite of Gordon's protests and entreaties, could not stand the climate. They died like flies. Of one detachment of 250, half were dead in three months, 100 of the others were invalided, and only 25 remained fit for duty. From a further body of 150 men sent as a reinforcement, half were reported on the sick list the day after their arrival. The main buttress of the Khedive's authority in this region was therefore hollow and erected on an insecure foundation. The Egyptian soldiers possessed firearms, and the natives, in their ignorance that they could not shoot straight, were afraid of them; but the natural progress of knowledge would inevitably prove fatal to that unreal supremacy, and eventually entail the collapse of the Cairo administration in the Soudan and the remoter districts on the Equator.

out all night in the rain, and had been left by its mother. I carried it in, and seeing the corpse was not moved, I sent again about it, and went with the men to have it buried. To my surprise and astonishment, she was alive. After considerable trouble I got the black brothers to lift her out of the mud, poured some brandy down her throat, and got her into a hut with a fire, having the mud washed out of her eyes. She was not more than sixteen years of age. There she now lies. I cannot help hoping she is floating down with the tide to the haven of rest. The next day she was still alive, and the babe, not a year old, seized a gourd of milk, and drank it off like a man, and is apparently in for the pilgrimage of life. It does not seem the worse for its night out, depraved little wretch! . . . The black sister departed this life at 4 P.M., deeply lamented by me, not so by her black brothers, who thought her a nuisance. When I went to see her this morning I heard the 'lamentations' of something on the other side of the hut. I went round, and found another of our species, a visitor of ten or twelve months to this globe, lying in a pool of mud. I said, 'Here is another foundling!' and had it taken up. Its mother came up afterwards, and I mildly expostulated with her, remarking, however good it might be for the spawn of frogs, it was not good for our species. The creature drank milk after this with avidity."

Such incidents explain the hold Gordon obtained over the indigenous population of the Upper Nile. He made friends right and left, as he said, and the trust of the poor people, who had never received kindness, and whose ignorance of the first principles of justice was so complete that he said it would take three generations of sound and paternal government to accustom them to it, in General Gordon was complete and touching. A chapter might be filled with evidence to this effect, but it is unnecessary, as the facts are fully set forth in the "Letters" from Central Africa. The result alone need be dwelt on here. For only too brief a period, and as the outcome of his personal effort, these primitive races saw and experienced the beneficial results of a sound and well-balanced administration. The light was all too quickly withdrawn; but while it lasted, General Gordon stood out as a kind of redeemer for the Soudanese. The poor slaves, from whose limbs the chains of their oppressors had only just been struck, would come round him when anxious about his health, and gently touch him with their fingers. The hostile chiefs, hearing, as Bedden did, that he restored his cattle to and recompensed in other ways a friendly chief who had been attacked in mistake, would lie in wait for him, and lay their views and grievances before him. He could walk fearlessly and unarmed through their midst, and along the river banks for miles, when an Egyptian official

suppressed the slave-trade within his own jurisdiction, he was left free to accomplish the two ulterior objects of his mission, viz. the installation of the Khedive's flag on the Lakes, and the establishment of definite relations with Mtesa, whose truculent vassal, Kaba Rega, of Unyoro, showed open hostility and resentment at the threatened encroachment on his preserves.

It was neither a reprehensible nor an unintelligible vanity for the Egyptian ruler to desire the control of the whole of the great river, whose source had been traced south of the Equator, and 2000 miles beyond the limits of the Pharaohs' dominions. Nor was the desire diminished when, without sharing the gratification of the Prince in whose name he acted, General Gordon advanced cogent reasons for establishing a line of communication from Gondokoro, across the territory of Mtesa, with the port of Mombasa on the Indian Ocean. As Gordon pointed out, that place was nearly 1,100 miles from Khartoum, and only 900 from Mombasa, while the advance to the Lakes increased the distance from the one place by nearly 300 miles, and reduced that to the other in the same measure. This short and advantageous line of communication with the Equatorial Province and Upper Nile was beyond both the power and the sphere of the Khedive; but in the task of winning one of the most important of African zones formally recognised as lying within the British sphere of influence, the route advocated by General Gordon in 1875 has now become of the most undoubted value and importance.

The aversion to all forms of notoriety except that which was inseparable from his duty led Gordon to shrink from the publicity and congratulations sure to follow if he were the first to navigate those inland seas on the Equator. Having made all the arrangements, and provided for the complete security of the task, he decided to baffle the plans in his honour of the Royal Geographical Society, by delegating the duty of first unfurling the Khedive's flag on their waters to his able and much-trusted lieutenant, Gessi. Although he sometimes took hasty resolutions, in flat opposition to his declared intentions, he would probably have adhered to this determination but for reading in one of Dr Schweinfurth's published lectures that "it may be that Lake Albert belongs to the Nile basin, but it is not a settled fact, for there are seventy miles between Foweira and Lake Albert never explored, and one is not authorised in making the Nile leave Lake Albert. The question is very doubtful." The accidental perusal of this passage changed General Gordon's views. He felt that this task devolved on him as the responsible administrator of the whole region, and that his natural shrinking from trumpery and too often easily-earned geogra-

not diminish his spirit. Baker decreed his deposition as King of Unyoro, proclaiming in his stead a cousin named Rionga, but the order had no practical effect. Kaba Rega retired a little from the vicinity of the Egyptian forces ; he retained "the magic stool" of authority over the lands and peoples of Unyoro, and his cousin Rionga possessed nothing beyond the empty title contained in an Egyptian official decree. This was the position when Gordon appeared on the scene, and his first obligation was to give something like force and reality to the pretensions of Rionga.

If Kaba Rega had been satisfied to retain the practical marks of authority, it is probable that Gordon would have been well content to leave him alone, but irritated by the slight placed upon him by Sir Samuel Baker, he assumed the offensive on every possible occasion. He attacked Colonel Long, one of Gordon's lieutenants, on his way back from Mtesa, just as he had Baker ; he threatened the Egyptian station at Foweira ; and above all, he welcomed the thwarted slave-dealers, who were not averse to taking their revenge in any form at Gordon's expense. In these circumstances an active policy was forced on General Gordon, who promptly decided that Kaba Rega was "too treacherous" to be allowed to retain his kingdom, and that measures must be taken to set up Rionga in his place. It was at this moment, unfortunately, that General Gordon discovered the worthlessness of his troops, and when, in 1876, he had organised his new force, and was ready to carry out the policy he had decided on in 1874, he was thinking mostly of his departure from the Soudan, and had no time to proceed to extremities against these southern adversaries, for behind Kaba Rega stood Mtesa.

When Gordon, in January 1876, entered the territory of Unyoro, belonging to Kaba Rega, he found it desirable to take up the cause of *Anfina*, in preference to that of *Rionga*, as the more influential chief ; but neither proved in popularity or expertness a match for Kaba Rega. The possession of "the magic stool," the ancestral throne or copper seat of the family of Unyoro, believed to be identified with the fortunes of the little kingdom, alone compensated for the few losses in the open field, as Kaba Rega was always careful to retreat on the approach of his most dangerous adversary. Neither of his kinsmen was likely to prove a formidable foe. Rionga passed his hours in native excesses, in the joy of receiving the titular rank of Vakil to the Khedive. Anfina alienated Gordon's friendly feeling by suggesting the wholesale assassination of Kaba Rega's officers and followers when they came on a mission to his camp. Kaba Rega carried off the stool to the south, or rather the west, of Victoria Nyanza, and bided his time, while Mtesa wrote a half-defiant

there remained no let or hindrance to his departure ; and by the end of October he was in Khartoum. But even then he felt uncertain as to his ultimate plans, and merely telegraphed to the Cairo authorities that he intended to come down for a time. With his back turned on the scene of his labours, the old desire not to leave his work half done came over him, and all the personal inconvenience and incessant hardship and worry of the task were forgotten in the belief that he was called on by God "to open the country thoroughly to both Lakes." He saw very clearly that what he had accomplished in the three years of his stay did not provide a permanent or complete cure of the evils arising out of the slave-trade and the other accompaniments of misgovernment, and he did not like to be beaten, which he admitted he was if he retired without remedying anything. These reflections explain why, even when leaving, his thoughts were still of returning and resuming the work, little more than commenced, in those Mussulman countries, where he foresaw a crisis that must come about soon.

But these thoughts and considerations did not affect his desire for a change to Lower Egypt, or even to visit home ; and leaving Khartoum on 12th November he reached Cairo on 2nd December. He then formally placed his resignation in the Khedive's hands, but it was neither accepted nor declined ; and the Khedive, in some mysterious manner, seems to have arrived at the sound conclusion that after a brief rest General Gordon would sicken of inaction, and that it would be no difficult manner to lure him back to that work in the Soudan which had already established its spell over him. Of that work, considerable as it was as the feat of a single man, it need only be said that it would have remained transitory in its effect and inconclusive in its results if General Gordon had finally turned his back on it at the close of his tenure of the post of Governor of the Equatorial Province at the end of the year 1876. When he left Cairo in the middle of December for England there was really very little reason to doubt that at the right moment he would be ready to take up the work again.

miserably unhappy population. How completely the project was carried out by one man, where powerful Governments and large armies have failed both before and since, has now to be demonstrated.

General Gordon proceeded direct from Cairo to Massowah, which route he selected because he hoped to settle the Abyssinian dispute before he commenced operations in the Soudan. Both the Khedive and the British Government wished a termination to be put to the troubles that had for some time prevailed in the border lands of Abyssinia and the Eastern Soudan, and it was hoped that Gordon's reputation and energy would facilitate the removal of all difficulties with King John, who, after the death of Theodore, had succeeded in obtaining the coveted title of "Negus."

In order to understand the position, a few historical facts must be recorded. By the year 1874 King John's authority was established over every province except in the south, Shoa, where Menelik retained his independence, and in the north, Bogos, which was seized in the year stated by Munzinger Bey, a Swiss holding the post of Governor of Massowah under the Khedive. In seizing Bogos, Munzinger had dispossessed its hereditary chief, Walad el Michael, who retired to Hamaçem, also part of his patrimony, where he raised forces in self-defence. Munzinger proposed to annex Hamaçem, and the Khedive assented; but he entrusted the command of the expedition to Arokol Bey, and a Danish officer named Arendrup as military adviser, and Munzinger was forced to be content with a minor command at Tajoura, where he was killed some months later. The Egyptian expedition meantime advanced with equal confidence and carelessness upon Hamaçem, Michael attacked it in several detachments, and had the double satisfaction of destroying the troops and capturing their arms and ammunition. Such was the disastrous commencement of those pending questions to which the Khedive Ismail referred in his letter to General Gordon.

The Khedive decided to retrieve this reverse, and to continue his original design. With this object a considerable number of troops were sent to Massowah, and the conduct of the affair was entrusted to Ratib Pasha and an American soldier of fortune, Colonel Loring Pasha. By this time—1876—Michael had quarrelled with King John, who had compelled him to give up the weapons he had captured from the Egyptians, and, anxious for revenge, he threw in his lot with his recent adversaries. The Egyptian leaders showed they had not profited by the experience of their predecessors. They advanced in the same bold and incautious manner, and after they had built two strong forts on the Gura plateau they were induced, by jealousy of each other or contempt

where a number of matters claimed his pressing attention. In that province there were several large Egyptian garrisons confined in two or three towns, and unable—through fear, as it proved, but on account of formidable enemies, as was alleged—to move outside them. The reports of trouble and hostility were no doubt exaggerated, but still there was a simmering of disturbance below the surface that portended peril in the future; and read by the light of after events, it seems little short of miraculous that General Gordon was able to keep it under by his own personal energy and the magic of his name. When on the point of starting to relieve these garrisons, he found himself compelled to disband a regiment of 500 Bashi-Bazouks, who constituted the only force at his immediate disposal. He had then to organise a non-descript body, after the same fashion as he had adopted at the Equator, and with 500 followers of this kind—of whom he said only 150 were any good—he started on his march for the districts which lie several hundred miles west of the White Nile, and approach most nearly of the Khedive's possessions to Lake Tchad.

The enemies with whom General Gordon had to deal were two. There was first Haroun, who claimed, as the principal survivor after Zebehr's invasion of Darfour, already described, to be the true Sultan of that State; and secondly, Suleiman, the son of Zebehr, and the nominal leader of the slave-dealers. While the former was in open revolt, the latter's covert hostility was the more to be dreaded, although Suleiman might naturally hesitate to throw off the mask lest his revolt might be the signal for his father's execution at Cairo—Zebehr having been detained there after his too confiding visit a few years before. It was therefore both prudent and necessary to ignore Suleiman until Haroun had been brought into subjection, or in some other way compelled to desist from acts of hostility.

General Gordon's plan was simple in the extreme. Leaving the Nile with 500 men, he determined to collect *en route* the efficient part of the scattered garrisons, sending those who were not efficient to the river for transport to Khartoum, and with this force to relieve the garrison at Fasher, the most distant of the large towns or stations in Darfour. It will be understood that these garrisons numbered several thousand men each, while Gordon's relieving body was only a few hundreds; but their *morale* had sunk so low that they dared not take the field against an enemy whom their own terror, and not the reality, painted as formidable. Even before he began his advance, Gordon had taken a fair measure of the revolt, which he expressed himself confident of suppressing without firing a shot. At Dara, the place which in the Mahdist war was well defended by Slatin Pasha, he released 1800



troops ; but he was kept in inactivity for some weeks owing to the necessity of organising his force and of ascertaining how far Suleiman, with his robber confederacy of 10,000 fighting men at Shaka—only 150 miles south-east of Dara—might be counted on to remain quiet. During this period of suspense he was compelled to take the field against a formidable tribe called by the name of the Leopard, which threatened his rear. It is unnecessary to enter upon the details of this expedition, which was completely successful, notwithstanding the cowardice of his troops, and which ended with the abject submission of the offending clan.

Having assembled a force of a kind of 3,500 men, he resolved to make a forced march to Fascher, and then with the same promptitude to descend on Shaka, and settle the pending dispute with Suleiman. These plans he kept locked in his own bosom, for his camp was full of spies, and his own surroundings were not to be trusted.

Leaving the main portion of his troops at Dara, he advanced on Fascher at the head of less than 1000 men, taking the lead himself with the small bodyguard he had organised of 150 picked Soudanese. With these he entered Fascher, where there were 3000 troops, and the Pasha, Hassan Helmi, had 10,000 more at Kolkol, three days' journey away. Gordon found the garrison quite demoralised, and afraid to move outside the walls. He at once ordered Hassan Pasha to come to him, with the intention of punishing him by dismissal for his negligence and cowardice in commanding a force that, properly led, might have coerced the whole province, when the alarming news reached the Governor-General that Suleiman and his band had quitted Shaka, and were plundering in the neighbourhood of Dara itself. The gravity of this danger admitted of no delay. Not a moment could be spared to either punish an incapable lieutenant or to crush the foe Haroun, whose proceedings were the alleged main cause of trouble in Darfour. Gordon returned with his bodyguard as fast as possible, and, leaving even it behind, traversed the last eighty-five miles alone on his camel in a day and a half. Here may be introduced what he wrote himself on the subject of these rapid and often solitary camel journeys :—

“I have a splendid camel—none like it ; it flies along, and quite astonishes even the Arabs. I came flying into this station in Marshal's uniform, and before the men had had time to unpile their arms, I had arrived, with only one man with me. I could not help it ; the escort did not come in for an hour and a half afterwards. The Arab chief who came with me said it was the telegraph. The Gordons and the camels are of the same race—let them take an idea into their heads, and nothing will take it out. . . . It is fearful to see the Governor-

mination to act on his own responsibility. On at least two occasions he expresses a feeling of gratification at having caused murderers to be hung.

This is a suitable moment to lay stress on the true views Gordon held on the subject of bloodshed. While averse to all warfare by disposition, and without the smallest trace of what might be called the military spirit, General Gordon had none of that timid and unreasoning shrinking from taking life, which is often cruel and always cowardly. He punished the guilty without the least false compunction, even with a death sentence, and if necessity left no choice, he would have executed that sentence himself, provided he was quite convinced of its justice. As a rule, he went unarmed in the Soudan, as in China; but there were exceptions, and on at least one occasion he took an active and decisive part in a conflict. He was being attacked by one of the tribes, and his men were firing wildly and without result. Then Gordon snatched a rifle from one of his men, and firing at the hostile leader, killed him. There are at least two other incidents that will show him in a light that many of his admirers would keep suppressed, but that bring out his human nature. A clumsy servant fired off his heavy duck-gun close to his head, and Gordon very naturally gave him a smart box on the ears which the fellow would remember for a week. Excited by the misery of a slave-gang, he asked the boy in charge of them to whom they belonged, and as he hesitated, he struck him across the face with his whip. Gordon's comment on this act is that it was "cruel and cowardly, but he was enraged, and could not help it." One feels on reading this that one would have done so oneself, and that, after all, Gordon was a man, and not a spiritual abstraction.

Thus ended the first eventful year of General Gordon's tenure of the post of Governor-General of the Soudan. Some idea of the magnitude of the task he had performed may be gathered from the fact that during this period he rode nearly 4000 miles on his camel through the desert. He put before himself the solution of eight burning questions, and by the end of 1877 he had settled five of them more or less permanently. He had also effected many reforms in the military and civil branches of the administration, and had formed the nucleus of a force in which he could put some confidence. By the people he was respected and feared, and far more liked than he imagined. "Send us another Governor like Gordon" was the burden of the Soudanese cry to Slatin when the shadow of the Mahdi's power had already fallen over the land. He had respected their religion and prejudices. When their Mahommedan co-religionists had ground them down to the dust, even desecrating their mosques by turning them into powder magazines, General Gordon showed them justice and merciful consideration, restored and endowed

This document was published by his brother, Sir Henry Gordon, in 1886, and the following description merely summarises its contents.

As far back as the year 1875 the Khedive Ismail began to discover that the financial position of his Government was bad, and that it would be impossible to keep up the payment of the interest on the debt at the high rate of seven per cent., which Egypt had bound itself to pay. He therefore applied to the British Government for advice and assistance. In response to his representations, a Financial Commission, composed of three members—Mr Cave, Colonel Stokes, and Mr Rivers Wilson—was sent to Egypt for the purpose of inquiring into the financial position of that country. They had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that it was unsound, and that the uneasiness of Ismail Pasha had not been expressed a day too soon. They recommended that an arrangement should be come to with the bondholders by which all the loans were to be placed on the same footing, and the rate of interest reduced to some figure that might be agreed upon. It then became necessary to negotiate with the bondholders, who appointed Mr Goschen for the English section, and M. Joubert for the French, to look after their rights. The result of their efforts in 1876 was that they united the loans into one, bearing a uniform rate of six per cent. instead of seven, and that four Commissioners were appointed to look after the debt in the interests of the bondholders, while two other European officials were nominated—one to control the receipts, the other the expenditure. In less than two years Ismail Pasha discovered that this arrangement had not remedied the evil, and that the Government was again on the verge of bankruptcy. It was at this juncture that the Khedive applied to General Gordon, in the hope that his ability and reputation would provide an easy escape from his dilemma.

General Gordon agreed to accept the post of President of this Commission of Inquiry, and he also fell in with the Khedive's own wish and suggestion that the Commissioners of the Debt should not be members of the Commission. This point must be carefully borne in mind, as the whole negotiation failed because of the Khedive's weakness in waiving the very point he rightly deemed vital for success. Having laid down the only principle to which he attached importance, the Khedive went on to say that M. de Lesseps would act in conjunction with General Gordon, and that these two, with some vague assistance from financial experts, were to form the Commission. It soon became evident that M. de Lesseps had no serious views on the subject, and that he was only too much disposed to yield to external influences.

General Gordon, intent on business, called on Lesseps the next day—that is to say, two days after his arrival from Khartoum—the French engineer met him with the smiling observation that he was off for a day in the country, and that he had just sent a telegram to Paris. He handed Gordon a copy, which was to this effect: “His Highness the Khedive has begged me to join with M. Gordon and *the Commissioners of the Debt* in making an inquiry into the finances of Egypt; I ask permission.” Gordon’s astonished ejaculation “This will never do” was met with the light-hearted Frenchman’s remark, “I must go, and it must go.”

Then General Gordon hastened with the news and the draft of the telegram to the Khedive. The copy was sent in to Ismail Pasha in his private apartments. On mastering its contents, he rushed out, threw himself on a sofa, and exclaimed, “I am quite upset by this telegram of Lesseps; some one must go after him and tell him not to send it.” Then turning to Gordon, he said, “I put the whole affair into your hands.” Gordon, anxious to help the Khedive, and also hoping to find an ally out of Egypt, telegraphed at great length to Mr Goschen, in accordance with the Khedive’s suggestion. Unfortunately, Mr Goschen replied with equal brevity and authority, “I will not look at you; the matter is in the hands of Her Majesty’s Government.” When we remember that Gordon was the properly-appointed representative of an independent Prince, or at least of a Prince independent of England, we cannot wonder at his terming this a “rude answer.” Mr Goschen may have had some after-qualms himself, for he telegraphed some days later in a milder tone, but Gordon would not take an affront from any man, and left it unanswered.

At this crisis Gordon, nothing daunted, made a proposal which, if the Khedive had had the courage to carry it out, might have left the victory with them. He proposed to the Khedive to issue a decree suspending the payment of the coupon, paying all pressing claims, and stating that he did all this on the advice of Gordon. Failing that, Gordon offered to telegraph himself to Lord Derby, the Foreign Secretary, and accept the full responsibility for the measure. Ismail was not equal to the occasion. He shut himself up in his harem for two days, and, as Gordon said, “the game was lost.”

General Gordon was now to experience the illimitable extent of human ingratitude. Even those who disagreed with the views he expressed on this subject cannot deny his loyalty to the Khedive, or the magnitude of the efforts he made on his behalf. To carry out the wishes of the Prince in whose service he was for the time being, he was prepared to accept every responsibility, and to show an unswerving

devotion in a way that excited the opposition and hostility even of those whom he might otherwise have termed his friends and well-wishers. By an extreme expedient, which would either have ruined himself or thwarted the plans of powerful statesmen, and financiers not less powerful, he would have scaled his devotion to Ismail Pasha; but the moral or physical weakness of the Oriental prevented the attempt being made. The delay mentioned allowed of fresh pressure being brought to bear on the Khedive; and while Gordon emphatically declared, partly from a sense of consistency, and partly because he hoped to stiffen the Khedive's resolution that he would not act with the Debt Commissioners on the Inquiry, Ismail Pasha was coerced or induced into surrendering all he had been fighting for. He gave his assent to the Commissioners being on the Inquiry, and he turned his back on the man who had come from the heart of Africa to his assistance. When Gordon learnt these facts, he resolved to return to the Soudan, and he was allowed to do so without the least mark of honour or word of thanks from the Khedive. His financial episode cost him £800 out of his own pocket, and even if we consider that the financial situation in the Delta, with all its cross-currents of shady intrigue and selfish designs, was one that he was not quite qualified to deal with, we cannot dispute that his propositions were full of all his habitual nobility of purpose, and that they were practical, if they could ever have been put into effect.

This incident serves to bring out some of the limitations of Gordon's ability. His own convictions, strengthened by the solitary life he had led for years in the Soudan, did not make him well adapted for any form of diplomacy. His methods were too simple, and his remedies too exclusively based on a radical treatment, to suit every complaint in a complicated state of society; nor is it possible for the majority of men to be influenced by his extraordinary self-abnegation and disregard for money. During this very mission he boasted that he was able to get to bed at eight o'clock, because he never dined out, and that he did not care at everyone laughing at him, and saying he was in the sulks. This mode of living was due, not to any peculiarity about General Gordon—although I trace to this period the opinion that he was mad—but mainly to his honest wish not to be biassed by any European's judgment, and to be able to give the Khedive absolutely independent advice, as if he himself were an Egyptian, speaking and acting for Egypt. Enough has been said to explain why he failed to accomplish a really impossible task. Nor is it necessary to assume that because they differed from him and strenuously opposed his project, the other Englishmen in authority in the Delta were influenced by any unworthy motives or pursued a policy that was either reprehensible or unsound.



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he wrote, for not merely had his personal feelings towards Ismail changed after he threw him over at Cairo, but he had found out the futility of writing to him on any subject connected with the Soudan, and with this knowledge had come a feeling of personal indifference.

On his return to Khartoum, he received tidings of the execution of Sulciman, and also of the death of the Darfourian Sultan, Haroun, so that he felt justified in assuming that complete tranquillity had settled down on the scene of war. The subsequent capture and execution of Abdulgassin proved this view to be well founded, for, with the exception of Rabi, who escaped to Borgu, he was the last of Zebehr's chief lieutenants. The shot that killed that brigand, the very man who shed the child's blood to consecrate the standard, was the last fired under Gordon's orders in the Soudan. If the slave trade was then not absolutely dead, it was doomed so long as the Egyptian authorities pursued an active repressive policy such as their great English representative had enforced. The military confederacy of Zebehr, which had at one time alarmed the Khedive in his palace at Cairo, had been broken up. The authority of the Khartoum Governor-General had been made supreme. As Gordon said, on travelling down from Khartoum in August 1879, "Not a man could lift his hand without my leave throughout the whole extent of the Soudan."

General Gordon reached Cairo on 23rd August, with the full intention of retiring from the Egyptian service; but before he could do so there remained the still unsolved Abyssinian difficulty, which had formed part of his original mission. He therefore yielded to the request of the Khedive to proceed on a special mission to the Court of King John, then ruling that inaccessible and mysterious kingdom, and one week after his arrival at Cairo he was steaming down the Red Sea to Massowah. His instructions were contained in a letter from T'ewfik Pasha to himself. After proclaiming his pacific intentions, the Khedive exhorted him "to maintain the rights of Egypt, to preserve intact the frontiers of the State, without being compelled to make any restitution to Abyssinia, and to prevent henceforth every encroachment or other act of aggression in the interests of both countries."

In order to explain the exact position of affairs in Abyssinia at this period, a brief summary must be given of events between Gordon's first overtures to King John in March 1877, and his taking up the matter finally in August 1879. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, those overtures came to nothing, because King John was called away to engage in hostilities with Menelik, King of Shoa, and now himself Negus, or Emperor of Abyssinia. In the autumn of the earlier year King John wrote Gordon a very civil letter, calling him a Christian and

a brother, but containing nothing definite, and ending with the assertion that "all the world knows the Abyssinian frontier." Soon after this Walad el Michael recommenced his raids on the border, and when he obtained some success, which he owed to the assistance of one of Gordon's own subordinates, given while Gordon was making himself responsible for his good conduct, he was congratulated by the Egyptian War Minister, and urged to prosecute the conquest of Abyssinia. Instead of attempting the impossible, he very wisely came to terms with King John, who, influenced perhaps by Gordon's advice, or more probably by his own necessities through the war with Menelik, accepted Michael's promises to respect the frontier. Michael went to the King's camp to make his submission in due form, and in the spring of 1879 it became known that he and the Abyssinian General (Ras Alula) were planning an invasion of Egyptian territory. Fortunately King John was more peacefully disposed, and still seemed anxious to come to an arrangement with General Gordon.

In January 1879 the King wrote Gordon a letter, saying that he hoped to see him soon, and he also sent an envoy to discuss matters. The Abyssinian stated very clearly that his master would not treat with the Khedive, on account of the way he had subjected his envoys at Cairo to insult and injury; but that he would negotiate with Gordon, whom he persisted in styling the "Sultan of the Soudan." King John wanted a port, the restoration of Bogos, and an Abouna or Coptic Archbishop from Alexandria, to crown him in full accordance with Abyssinian ritual. Gordon replied a port was impossible, but that he should have a Consul and facilities for traffic at Massowah; that the territory claimed was of no value, and that he certainly should have an Abouna. He also undertook to do his best to induce the British Government to restore to King John the crown of King Theodore, which had been carried off after the fall of Magdala. The envoy then returned to Abyssinia, and nothing further took place until Gordon's departure for Massowah in August, when the rumoured plans of Michael and Ras Alula were causing some alarm.

On reaching Massowah on 6th September, Gordon found that the Abyssinians were in virtual possession of Bogos, and that if the Egyptian claims were to be asserted, it would be necessary to retake it. The situation had, however, been slightly improved by the downfall of Michael, whose treachery and covert hostility towards General Gordon would probably have led to an act of violence. But he and Ras Alula had had some quarrel, and the Abyssinian General had seized the occasion to send Michael and his officers as prisoners to the camp of King John. The chief obstacle to a satisfactory arrangement being



The motive of this step is not clear, for Ras Arya declared that he was at feud with the King, and that he would willingly help the Egyptians to conquer the country. He however went on to explain that the seizure of Gordon's party was due to the King's order that it should not be allowed to return to Egypt by any other route than that through Massowah.

Unfortunately, the step seemed so full of menace that as a precaution Gordon felt compelled to destroy the private journal he had kept during his visit, as well as some valuable maps and plans. After leaving the district of this prince, Gordon and his small party had to make their way as best they could to get out of the country, only making their way at all by a lavish payment of money—this journey alone costing £1400—and by submitting to be bullied and insulted by every one with the least shadow of authority. At last Massowah was reached in safety, and every one was glad, because reports had become rife as to King John's changed attitude towards Gordon, and the danger to which he was exposed. But the Khedive was too much occupied to attend to these matters, or to comply with Gordon's request to send a regiment and a man-of-war to Massowah, as soon as the Abyssinian despot made him to all intents and purposes a prisoner. The neglect to make that demonstration not only increased the very considerable personal danger in which Gordon was placed during the whole of his mission, but it also exposed Massowah to the risk of capture if the Abyssinians had resolved to attack it.

The impressions General Gordon formed of the country were extremely unfavourable. The King was cruel and avaricious beyond all belief, and in his opinion fast going mad. The country was far less advanced than he had thought. The people were greedy, unattractive, and quarrelsome. But he detected their military qualities, and some of the merits of their organisation. "They are," he wrote, "a race of warriors, hardy, and, though utterly undisciplined, religious fanatics. I have seen many peoples, but I never met with a more fierce, savage set than these. The King said he could beat united Europe, except Russia."

The closing incidents of Gordon's tenure of the post of Governor-General of the Soudan have now to be given, and they were not characterised by that spirit of justice, to say nothing of generosity, which his splendid services and complete loyalty to the Khedive's Government demanded. During his mission into Abyssinia his natural demands for support were completely ignored, and he was left to whatever fate might befall him. When he succeeded in extricating himself from that perilous position, he found that the Khedive was so annoyed at his inability to exact from his truculent neighbour a treaty without

## CHAPTER IX.

### MINOR MISSIONS—INDIA AND CHINA.

GENERAL GORDON arrived in London at the end of January 1880—having lingered on his home journey in order to visit Rome—resolved as far as he possibly could to take that period of rest which he had thoroughly earned, and which he so much needed. But during these last few years of his life he was to discover that the world would not leave him undisturbed in the tranquillity he desired and sought. Everyone wished to see him usefully and prominently employed for his country's good, and offers, suitable and not suitable to his character and genius, were either made to him direct, or put forward in the public Press as suggestions for the utilization of his experience and energy in the treatment of various burning questions. His numerous friends also wished to do him honour, and he found himself threatened with being drawn into the vortex of London Society, for which he had little inclination, and, at that time, not even the strength and health.

After this incident he left London on 29th February for Switzerland, where he took up his residence at Lausanne, visiting *en route* at Brussels, Mr, afterwards Lord, Vivian, then Minister at the Belgian Court, who had been Consul-General in Egypt during the financial crisis episode. It is pleasant to find that that passage had, in this case, left no ill-feeling behind it on either side, and that Gordon promised to think over the advice Mrs Vivian gave him to get married while he was staying at the Legation. His reply must not be taken as of any serious import, and was meant to turn the subject. About the same time he wrote in a private letter, "Wives! wives! what a trial you are to your husbands! From my experience married men have more or less a cowed look."

It was on this occasion that Gordon was first brought into contact with the King of the Belgians, and had his attention drawn to the prospect of suppressing the slave trade from the side of the Congo, somewhat analogous to his own project of crushing it from Zanzibar. The following unpublished letter gives an amusing account of the circumstances under which he first met King Leopold:—

regretted that this union will give just the chance Russia wants to interfere again; and though, when the union takes place, I believe Russia will repent it, still it will always be to Russia that they will look till the union is accomplished.

"I suppose the Turks are capable of appreciating what they gained by the Treaty of Berlin. *They were fully aware that the Treaty of San Stephano was their coup de grâce.* But the Treaty of Berlin was supposed to be beneficial to them. Why? By it Turkey lost *not only Bulgaria and Roumelia* (for she has virtually lost it), but *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, while she gained the utterly impossible advantage of occupying the Balkans, with a hostile nation to north and south.

"I therefore maintain that the Treaty of Berlin did no good to Turkey, but infinite harm to Europe.

"I will now go on to the Cyprus convention, and say a few words on the bag-and-baggage policy. Turkey and Egypt are governed by a ring of Pashas, most of them Circassians, and who are perfect foreigners in Turkey. They are, for the greater part, men who, when boys, have been bought at prices varying from £50 to £70, and who, brought up in the harems, have been pushed on by their purchasers from one grade to another. Some have been dancing boys and drummers, like Riaz and Ismail Eyoub of Egypt. I understand by bag-and-baggage policy the getting rid of, say, two hundred Pashas of this sort in Turkey, and sixty Pashas in Egypt. These men have not the least interest in the welfare of the countries; they are aliens and adventurers, they are hated by the respectable inhabitants of Turkey and Egypt, and they must be got rid of.

"Armenia is lost; it is no use thinking of reforms in it. The Russians virtually possess it; the sooner we recognise this fact the better. Why undertake the impossible?

"What should be done? Study existing facts, and decide on a definite line of policy, and follow it through. Russia, having a definite line of policy, is strong; we have not one, and are weak and vacillating. 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.'

"Supposing such a line of policy as follows was decided upon and followed up, it would be better than the worries of the last four years:—

"1. The complete purchase of Cyprus.

"2. The abandonment of the Asia Minor reforms.

"3. The union of Bulgaria and Roumelia, with a port.

"4. The increase of Greece.

"5. Constantinople, a State, under European guarantees.

"6. Increase of Montenegro, and Italy, on that coast.

"7. Annexation of Egypt by England, *either directly or by having paramount and entire authority.*

"8. Annexation of Syria by France—ditto—ditto—ditto. (By this means France would be as interested in stopping Russian progress as England is.)

"9. Italy to be allowed to extend towards Abyssinia.

"10. Re-establishment of the Turkish Constitution, and the establishment of a similar one in Egypt (these Constitutions, if not interfered with, would soon rid Turkey and Egypt of their parasite Pashas).

"I daresay this programme could be improved, but it has the advantage of being *definite*, and a definite policy, however imperfect, is better than an unstable or hand-to-mouth policy.

"I would not press these points at once; I would keep them in view, and let events work themselves out.

face of the vested interests out there. Seeing this, and seeing, moreover, that my views were so diametrically opposed to those of the official classes, I resigned. Lord Ripon's position was certainly a great consideration with me. It was assumed by some that my views of the state of affairs were the Viceroy's, and thus I felt that I should do him harm by staying with him. We parted perfect friends. The brusqueness of my leaving was unavoidable, inasmuch as my stay would have put me into the possession of secrets of State that—considering my decision eventually to leave—I ought not to know. Certainly I might have stayed a month or two, had a pain in the hand, and gone quietly; but the whole duties were so distasteful that I felt, being pretty callous as to what the world says, that it was better to go at once."

If a full explanation is sought of the reasons why Gordon repented of his decision, and determined to leave an uncongenial position without delay, it may be found in a consideration of the two following circumstances. His views as to what he held to be the excessive payment of English and other European servants in Asiatic countries were not new, and had been often expressed. They were crystallised in the phrase, "Why pay a man more at Simla than at Hongkong?" and had formed the basis of his projected financial reform in Egypt in 1878, and they often found expression in his correspondence. For instance, in a letter to the present writer, he proposed that the loss accruing from the abolition of the opium trade might be made good by reducing officers' pay from Indian to Colonial allowances. With Gordon's contempt for money, and the special circumstances that led to his not wanting any considerable sum for his own moderate requirements and few responsibilities, it is not surprising that he held these views; but no practical statesman could have attempted to carry them out. During the voyage to India the perception that it would be impossible for Lord Ripon to institute any special reorganisation on these lines led him to decide that it would be best to give up a post he did not like, and he wrote to his sister to this effect while at sea, with the statement that it was arranged that he should leave in the following September or October.

He reached Bombay on the 28th of May, and his resignation was received and accepted on the night of the 2nd June. What had happened in that brief interval of a few days to make him precipitate matters? There is absolutely no doubt, quite apart from the personal explanation given by General Gordon, both verbally and in writing, to myself, that the determining cause was the incident relating to Yakoob Khan.

That Afghan chief had been proclaimed and accepted as Ameer after the death of his father, the Ameer Shere Ali. In that capacity

Li Hung Chang, and accepted it on that assumption, which in the end proved erroneous. It is desirable to state that since Gordon's departure from China in 1865 at least one communication had passed between these former associates in a great enterprise. The following characteristic letter, dated Tientsin, 22nd March 1879, reached Gordon while he was at Khartoum :—

"DEAR SIR,—I am instructed by His Excellency the Grand Secretary, Li, to answer your esteemed favour, dated the 27th October 1878, from Khartoum, which was duly received. I am right glad to hear from you. It is now over fourteen years since we parted from each other. Although I have not written to you, but I often speak of you, and remember you with very great interest. The benefit you have conferred on China does not disappear with your person, but is felt throughout the regions in which you played so important and active a part. All those people bless you for the blessings of peace and prosperity which they now enjoy.

"Your achievements in Egypt are well known throughout the civilized world. I see often in the papers of your noble works on the Upper Nile. You are a man of ample resources, with which you suit yourself to any kind of emergency. My hope is that you may long be spared to improve the conditions of the people amongst whom your lot is cast. I am striving hard to advance my people to a higher state of development, and to unite both this and all other nations within the 'Four Seas' under one common brotherhood. To the several questions put in your note the following are the answers :—Kwoh Sung-Ling has retired from official life, and is now living at home. Yang Ta Jên died a great many years ago. Na Wang's adopted son is doing well, and is the colonel of a regiment, with 500 men under him. The Pa to' Chiaow Bridge, which you destroyed, was rebuilt very soon after you left China, and it is now in very good condition.

"Kwoh Ta jên, the Chinese Minister, wrote to me that he had the pleasure of seeing you in London. I wished I had been there also to see you ; but the responsibilities of life are so distributed to different individuals in different parts of the world, that it is a wise economy of Providence that we are not all in the same spot.

"I wish you all manner of happiness and prosperity. With my highest regards,—I remain, yours very truly

"(For LI HUNG CHANG),

TSËNG LAISUN."

Under the belief that Hart's telegram emanated from Li Hung Chang, and inspired by loyalty to a friend in a difficulty, as well as by affection for the Chinese people, whom in his own words he "liked best next after his own," Gordon replied to this telegram in the following message : "Inform Hart Gordon will leave for Shanghai first opportunity. As for conditions, Gordon indifferent."

At that moment China seemed on the verge of war with Russia, in consequence of the disinclination of the latter power to restore the province of Kuldja, which she had occupied at the time of the Mahomedan uprising in Central Asia. The Chinese official, Chung How, who had signed an unpopular treaty at Livadia, had been sentenced to death—the treaty itself had been repudiated—and hostilities were

required to defray his passage to China. But having made up his mind, such trifling difficulties were not likely to deter him. He sailed from Bombay, not inerey under the displeasure of his superiors and uncertain as to his own status, but also in that penniless condition, which was not wholly out of place in his character of knight-errant. But with that solid good sense, which so often retrieved his reputation in the eyes of the world, he left behind him the following public proclamation as to his mission and intentions. It was at once a public explanation of his proceedings, and a declaration of a pacific policy calculated to appease both official and Russian irritation :

"My fixed desire is to persuade the Chinese not to go to war with Russia, both in their own interests and for the sake of those of the world, especially those of England. In the event of war breaking out I cannot answer how I should act for the present, but I should ardently desire a speedy peace. It is my fixed desire, as I have said, to persuade the Chinese not to go to war with Russia. To me it appears that the question in dispute cannot be of such vital importance that an arrangement could not be come to by concessions upon both sides. Whether I succeed in being heard or not is not in my hands. I protest, however, at being regarded as one who wishes for war in any country, still less in China. Inclined as I am, with only a small degree of admiration for military exploits, I esteem it a far greater honour to promote peace than to gain any paltry honours in a wretched war."

With that message to his official superiors, as well as to the world, Gordon left Bombay on 13th June. His message of the day before saying, "Consult Campbell," had induced the authorities at the Horse Guards to make inquiries of that gentleman, who had no difficulty in satisfying them that the course of events was exactly as has here been set forth, and coupling that with Gordon's own declaration that he was for peace not war, permission was granted to Gordon to do that which at all cost he had determined to do. When he reached Ceylon he found this telegram : "Leave granted on your engaging to take no military service in China," and he somewhat too comprehensively, and it may even be feared rashly if events had turned out otherwise, replied : "I will take no military service in China : I would never embarrass the British Government."

Having thus got clear of the difficulties which beset him on the threshold of his mission, Gordon had to prepare himself for those that were inherent to the task he had taken up. He knew of old how averse the Chinese are to take advice from any one, how they waste time in fathoming motives, and how when they say a thing shall be done it is never performed. Yet the memory of his former disinterested and

splendid service afforded a guarantee that if they would take advice and listen to unflattering criticism from any one, that man was Gordon. Still, from the most favourable point of view, the mission was fraught with difficulty, and circumstances over which he had no control, and of which he was even ignorant, added immensely to it. There is no doubt that Peking was at that moment the centre of intrigues, not only between the different Chinese leaders, but also among the representatives of the Foreign Powers. The secret history of these transactions has still to be revealed, and as our Foreign Office never gives up the private instructions it transmits to its representatives, the full truth may never be recorded. But so far as the British Government was concerned, its action was limited to giving the Minister, Sir Thomas Wade, instructions to muzzle Gordon and prevent his doing anything that wasn't strictly in accordance with official etiquette and quite safe, or, in a word, to make him do nothing. The late Sir Thomas Wade was a most excellent Chinese scholar and estimable person in every way, but when he tried to do what the British Government and the whole arrayed body of the Horse Guards, from the Commander-in-Chief down to the Deputy-Adjutant General, had failed to do, viz. to keep Gordon in leading strings, he egregiously failed. Sir Thomas Wade went so far as to order Gordon to stay in the British Legation, and to visit no one without his express permission. Gordon's reply was to ignore the British Legation and to never enter its portals during the whole of his stay in China.

That was one difficulty in the situation apart from the Russian question, but it was not the greatest, and as it was the first occasion on which European politics re-acted in a marked way on the situation in China, such details as are ascertainable are well worth recording at some length.

There is no doubt that the Russian Government was very much disturbed at what seemed an inevitable hostile collision with China. The uncertain result of such a contest along an enormous land-frontier, with which, at that time, Russia had very imperfect means of communication, was the least cause of its disquietude. A war with China signified to Russia something much more serious than this, viz., a breach of the policy of friendship to its vast neighbour, which it had consistently pursued for two centuries, and which it will pursue until it is ready to absorb, and then in the same friendly guise, its share of China. Under these circumstances the Russian Government looked round for every means of averting the catastrophe. It is necessary to guard oneself from seeming to imply that Russia was in any sense afraid, or doubtful as to the result of a war with China; her sole motives were those of astute and far-seeing policy. Whether the Russian

Ambassador at Berlin mooted the matter to Prince Bismarck, or whether that statesman, without inspiration, saw his chance of doing Russia a good turn at no cost to himself is not certain, but instructions were sent to Herr von Brandt, the German Minister at Peking, a man of great energy, and in favour of bold measures, to support the Peace Party in every way. He was exactly a man after Prince Bismarck's own heart, prepared to go to any lengths to attain his object, and fully persuaded that the end justifies the means. His plan was startlingly simple and bold. Li Hung Chang, the only prominent advocate of peace, was to rebel, march on Peking with his Black Flag army, and establish a Government of his own. There is no doubt whatever that this scheme was formed and impressed on Li Hung Chang as the acme of wisdom. More than that, it was supported by two other Foreign Ministers at Peking, with greater or less warmth, and one of them was Sir Thomas Wade. These plots were dispelled by the sound sense and candid but firm representations of Gordon. But for him, as will be seen, there would have been a rebellion in the country, and Li Hung Chang would now be either Emperor of China or a mere instance of a subject who had lost his head in trying to be supreme.

Having thus explained the situation that awaited Gordon, it is necessary to briefly trace his movements after leaving Ceylon. He reached Hongkong on 2nd July, and not only stayed there for a day or two as the guest of the Governor, Sir T. Pope Hennessey, but found sufficient time to pay a flying visit to the Chinese city of Canton. Thence he proceeded to Shanghai and Chefoo. At the latter place he found news, which opened his eyes to part of the situation, in a letter from Sir Robert Hart, begging him to come direct to him at Peking, and not to stop *en route* to visit Li Hung Chang at Tientsin. As has been explained, Gordon went to China in the full belief that, whatever names were used, it was his old colleague Li Hung Chang who sent for him, and the very first definite information he received on approaching the Chinese capital was that not Li, but persons whom by inference were inimical to Li, had sent for him. The first question that arises then was who was the real author of the invitation to Gordon that bore the name of Hart. It cannot be answered, for Gordon assured me that he himself did not know; but there is no doubt that it formed part of the plot and counter-plot originated by the German Minister, and responded to by those who were resolved, in the event of Li's rebellion, to uphold the Dragon Throne. Sir Robert Hart is a man of long-proved ability and address, who has rendered the Chinese almost as signal service as did Gordon himself, and on this occasion he was actuated by the highest possible



Central Government fear that the taking up of a spirited position by any pre-eminent Chinese would carry the Chinese people with him, and therefore the Central Government endeavour to keep up appearances, and to skirt the precipice of war as near as they possibly can, while never intending to enter into war.

"The Central Government residing in the extremity of the Middle Kingdom, away from the great influences which are now working in China, can never alter one iota from what they were years ago: they are being steadily left behind by the people they govern. They know this, and endeavour to stem these influences in all ways in their power, hoping to keep the people backward and in ignorance, and to retard their progress to the same pace they themselves go, if it can be called a pace at all.

"It is therefore a maxim that 'no progress can be made by the Pekin Government.' To them any progress, whether slow or quick, is synonymous to slow or quick extinction, for they will never move.

"The term 'Pekin Government' is used advisedly, for if the Central Government were moved from Pekin into some province where the pulsations and aspirations of the Chinese people could have their legitimate effect, then the Central Government and the Chinese people, having a unison of thought, would work together.

"From what has been said above, it is maintained that, so long as the Central Government of China isolates itself from the Chinese people by residing aloof at Pekin, so long will the Chinese people have to remain passive under the humiliations which come upon them through the non-progressive and destructive disposition of their Government. These humiliations will be the chronic state of the Chinese people until the Central Government moves from Pekin and reunites itself to its subjects. No army, no purchases of ironclad vessels will enable China to withstand a first-class Power so long as China keeps her queen bee at the entrance of her hive. There is, however, the probability that a proud people like the Chinese may sicken at this continual eating of humble pie, that the Pekin Government at some time, by skirting too closely the precipice of war may fall into it, and then that sequence may be anarchy and rebellion throughout the Middle Kingdom which may last for years and cause endless misery.

"It may be asked—How can the present state of things be altered? How can China maintain the high position that the wealth, industry, and innate goodness of the Chinese people entitle her to have among the nations of the world? Some may say by the revolt of this Chinaman or of that Chinaman. To me this seems most undesirable, for, in the first place, such action would not have the blessing of God, and, in the second, it would result in the country being plunged into civil war. The fair, upright, and open course for the Chinese people to take is to work, through the Press and by petitions, on the Central Government, and to request them to move from Pekin, and bring themselves thus more into unison with the Chinese people, and thus save that people the constant humiliations they have to put up with, owing to the seat of the Central Government being at Pekin. This recommendation would need no secret societies, no rebellion, no treason; if taken up and persevered in it must succeed, and not one life need be lost.

"The Central Government at Pekin could not answer the Chinese people except in the affirmative when the Chinese people say to the Central Government—'By your residing aloof from us in Pekin, where you are exposed to danger, you separate our interests from yours, and you bring on us humiliation, which we would never have to bear if you resided in the interior. Take our application into consideration, and grant our wishes.'

"I have been kindly treated by the Central Pekin Government and by the Chinese people; it is for the welfare of both parties that I have written and signed this paper. I may have expressed myself too strongly with respect to the non-progressive nature of the Pekin Government, who may desire the welfare of the Middle Kingdom as ardently as any other Chinese, but as long as the Pekin Government allow themselves to be led and directed by those drones of the hive, the Censors, so long must the Pekin Government bear the blame earned by those drones in plunging China into difficulties. In the insect world the bees get rid of the drones in winter."

There was yet a third memorandum of a confidential nature written to Li Hung Chang himself, of which Gordon did not keep a copy, but he referred to it in the letter written to myself which I have already quoted.

Having thus accomplished his double task, viz.: the prevention of war between Russia and China, and of a rebellion on the part of Li Hung Chang under European advice and encouragement, Gordon left China without any delay. When he reached Shanghai on 16th August he found another official telegram awaiting him: "Leave cancelled, resignation not accepted." As he had already taken his passage home he did not reply, but when he reached Aden he telegraphed as follows: "You might have trusted me. My passage from China was taken days before the arrival of your telegram which states 'leave cancelled.' Do you insist on rescinding the same?" The next day he received a reply granting him nearly six months' leave, and with that message the question of his alleged insubordination may be treated as finally settled. There can be no doubt that among his many remarkable achievements not the least creditable was this mission to China, when by downright candour, and unswerving resolution in doing the right thing, he not merely preserved peace, but baffled the intrigues of unscrupulous diplomatists and selfish governments.

With that incident closed Gordon's connection with China, the country associated with his most brilliant feats of arms, but in concluding this chapter it seems to me that I should do well to record some later expressions of opinion on that subject. The following interesting letter, written on the eve of the war between France and China in 1882, was published by the *New York Herald*:—

"The Chinese in their affairs with foreign nations are fully aware of their peculiar position, and count with reason that a war with either France or another Power will bring them perforce allies outside of England. The only Power that could go to war with them with impunity is Russia, who can attack them by land. I used the following argument to them when I was there:—The present dynasty of China is a usurping one—the Mantchou. We may say that it exists by sufferance at Pekin, and nowhere else in the Empire. If you look at the map of China Pekin is at the extremity of the Empire and not a week's marching from the Russian frontier. A war with

I say it is wrong, and that it is useless discussing whether eggs are good or not.

"Can anyone doubt but that, if the Chinese Government had the power, they would stop importation to-morrow? If so, why keep a pressure like this on China whom we need as a friend, and with whom this importation is and ever will be the sole point about which we could be at variance? I know this is the point with Li Hung Chang.

"People may laugh at *amour propre* of China. It is a positive fact, they are most-pigheaded on those points. China is the only nation in the world which is forced to take a thing she does not want. England is the only nation which forces another nation to do this, in order to benefit India by this act. Put like this it is outrageous.

"Note this, only certain classes of vessels are subject to the Foreign Customs Office at Canton. By putting all vessels under that Office the Chinese Government would make £2,000,000 a year more revenue. The Chinese Government will not do this however, because it would put power in hands of foreigners, so they lose it. Did you ever read the letters of the Ambassador before Marquis Tséng? His name, I think, was Coh or Kwoh. He wrote home to Pekin about Manchester, telling its wonders, but adding, 'These people are wonderful, but the masses are miserable far beyond Chinese. They think only of money and not of the welfare of the people.'

"Any foreign nation can raise the bile of Chinese by saying, 'Look at the English, they forced you to take their opium.'

"I should not be a bit surprised did I hear that Li Hung Chang smoked opium himself. I know a lot of the princes do, so they say. I have no doubt myself that what I have said is the true and only reason, or rather root reason. Put our nation in the same position of having been defeated and forced to accept some article which they used to consider bad for the health, like tea used to be, we would rebel as soon as we could against it, though our people drink tea. The opium trade is a standing, ever-present memento of defeat and heavy payments; and the Chinese cleverly take advantage of the fact that it is a deleterious drug.

"The opium wars were not about opium—opium was only a *cheval de bataille*. They were against the introduction of foreigners, a political question, and so the question of opium import is now. As for the loss to India by giving it up, it is quite another affair. On one hand you have gain, an embittered feeling and an injustice; on the other you have loss, friendly nations and justice. Cut down pay of all officers in India to Colonial allowances *above* rank of captains. Do not give them Indian allowances, and you will cover nearly the loss, I expect. Why should officers in India have more than officers in Hongkong?"

In a subsequent letter, dated from the Cape, 20th July 1882, General Gordon replied to some objections I had raised as follows:—

"As for the opium, to which you say the same objection applies as to tea, etc., it is not so, for opium has for ages been a tabooed article among Chinese respectable people. I own reluctance to foreign intercourse applies to what I said, but the Chinese know that the intercourse with foreigners cannot be stopped, and it, as well as the forced introduction of opium, are signs of defeat; yet one, that of intercourse, cannot be stopped or wiped away while the opium question can be. I am writing in a hurry, so am not very clear.

"What I mean is that no one country forces another country to take a

Gordon had a strain of Irish blood in him, but I have failed to discover it genealogically, nor was there any trace of its influence on his character. He was not fortunate in the season of the year he selected, nor in the particular part of the country he chose for his visit. There is scenery in the south-west division of Ireland, quite apart from the admitted beauty of the Killarney district, that will vie with better known and more highly lauded places in Scotland and Switzerland, but no one would recommend a stranger to visit that quarter of Ireland at the end of November, and the absence of cultivation, seen under the depressing conditions of Nature, would strike a visitor with all the effect of absolute sterility. Gordon was so impressed, and it seemed to him that the Irish peasants of a whole province were existing in a state of wretchedness exceeding anything he had seen in either China or the Soudan. If he had seen the same places six months earlier, he would have formed a less extreme view of their situation. It was just the condition of things that appealed to his sympathy, and with characteristic promptitude he put his views on paper, making one definite offer on his own part, and sent them to a friend, the present General James Donnelly, a distinguished engineer officer and old comrade, and moreover a member of a well-known Irish family. Considering the contents of the letter, and the form in which Gordon threw out his suggestions, it is not very surprising that General Donnelly sent it to *The Times*, in which it was published on 3rd December 1880; but Gordon himself was annoyed at this step being taken, because he realised that he had written somewhat hastily on a subject with which he could scarcely be deemed thoroughly acquainted. The following is its text :—

"You are aware how interested I am in the welfare of this country, and, having known you for twenty-six years, I am sure I may say the same of you.

"I have lately been over to the south-west of Ireland in the hope of discovering how some settlement could be made of the Irish question, which, like a fretting cancer, eats away our vitals as a nation.

"I have come to the conclusion that—

"1. A gulf of antipathy exists between the landlords and tenants of the north-west, west, and south-west of Ireland. It is a gulf which is not caused alone by the question of rent; there is a complete lack of sympathy between these two classes. It is useless to inquire how such a state of things has come to pass. I call your attention to the pamphlets, letters, and speeches of the landlord class, as a proof of how little sympathy or kindness there exists among them for the tenantry, and I am sure that the tenantry feel in the same way towards the landlords.

"2. No half-measured Acts which left the landlords with any say to the tenantry of these portions of Ireland will be of any use. They would be rendered—as past Land Acts in Ireland have been—quite abortive, for the landlords will insert clauses to do away with their force. Any half-measures

had been one of failure, was going to prove himself the ablest administrator and most astute statesman in Afghan history.

"Those who advocate the retention of Candahar do so generally on the ground that its retention would render more difficult the advance of Russia on, and would prevent her fomenting rebellion in, India, and that our prestige in India would suffer by its evacuation.

"I think that this retention would throw Afghanistan, in the hope of regaining Candahar, into alliance with Russia, and that thereby Russia would be given a temptation to offer which she otherwise would not have. Supposing that temptation did not exist, what other inducement could Russia offer for this alliance? The plunder of India. If, then, Russia did advance, she would bring her auxiliary tribes, who, with their natural predatory habits, would soon come to loggerheads with their natural enemies, the Afghans, and that the sooner when these latter were aided by us. Would the Afghans in such a case be likely to be tempted by the small share they would get of the plunder of India to give up their secure, independent position and our alliance for that plunder, and to put their country at the mercy of Russia, whom they hate as cordially as they do us? If we evacuate Candahar, Afghanistan can only have this small inducement of the plunder of India for Russia to offer her. Some say that the people of Candahar desire our rule. I cannot think that any people like being governed by aliens in race or religion. They prefer their own bad native governments to a stiff, civilized government, in spite of the increased worldly prosperity the latter may give.

"We may be sure that at Candahar the spirit which induced children to kill, or to attempt to kill our soldiers in 1879, etc., still exists, though it may be cowed. We have trouble enough with the fanatics of India; why should we go out of our way to add to their numbers?

"From a military point of view, by the retention we should increase the line we have to defend by twice the distance of Candahar to the present frontier, and place an objective point to be attacked. Naturally we should make good roads to Candahar, which on the loss of a battle there—and such things must be always calculated as within possibility—would aid the advance of the enemy to the Indus. The *débouché* of the defiles, with good lateral communications between them, is the proper line of defence for India, not the entry into those defiles, which cannot have secure lateral communications. If the entries of the defiles are held, good roads are made through them; and these aid the enemy, if you lose the entries or have them turned. This does not prevent the passage of the defiles being disputed.

"The retention of Candahar would tend to foment rebellion in India, and not prevent it; for thereby we should obtain an additional number of fanatical malcontents, who as British subjects would have the greatest facility of passing to and fro in India, which they would not have if we did not hold it.

"That our prestige would suffer in India by the evacuation I doubt; it certainly would suffer if we kept it and forsook our word—*i.e.* that we made war against Shere Ali, and not against his people. The native peoples of India would willingly part with any amount of prestige if they obtained less taxation.

"India should be able, by a proper defence of her present frontier and by the proper government of her peoples, to look after herself. If the latter is wanting, no advance of frontier will aid her.

"I am not anxious about Russia; but, were I so, I would care much more to see precautions taken for the defence of our Eastern colonies, now

that Russia has moved her Black Sea naval establishment to the China Sea, than to push forward an outstretched arm to Candahar. The interests of the Empire claim as much attention as India, and one cannot help seeing that they are much more imperilled by this last move of Russia than by anything she can do in Central Asia.

"Politically, militarily, and morally, Candahar ought not to be retained. It would oblige us to keep up an interference with the internal affairs of Afghanistan, would increase the expenditure of impoverished India, and expose us chronically to the reception of those painfully sensational telegrams of which we have had a surfeit of late."

During these few months Gordon wrote on several other subjects—the Abyssinian question, in connection with which he curiously enough styled "the Abyssinians the best of mountaineers," a fact not appreciated until their success over the Italians many years later, the registration of slaves in Egypt, and the best way of carrying on irregular warfare in difficult country and against brave and active races. His remarks on the last subject were called forth by our experiences in the field against the Zulus in the first place, and the Boers in the second, and quite exceptional force was given to them by the occurrence of the defeat at Majuba Hill one day after they appeared in the *Army and Navy Gazette*. For this reason I quote the article in its entirety:—

"The individual man of any country in which active outdoor life, abstinence, hunting of wild game, and exposure to all weathers are the habits of life, is more than a match for the private soldier of a regular army, who is taken from the plough or from cities, and this is the case doubly as much when the field of operations is a difficult country, and when the former is, and the latter is not, acclimatised. On the one hand, the former is accustomed to the climate, knows the country, and is trained to long marches and difficulties of all sorts inseparable from his daily life; the latter is unacclimatised, knows nothing of the country, and, accustomed to have his every want supplied, is at a loss when any extraordinary hardships or difficulties are encountered; he has only his skill in his arms and discipline in his favour, and sometimes that skill may be also possessed by his foe. The native of the country has to contend with a difficulty in maintaining a long contest, owing to want of means and want of discipline, being unaccustomed to any yoke interfering with individual freedom. The resources of a regular army, in comparison to those of the natives of the country, are infinite, but it is accustomed to discipline. In a difficult country, when the numbers are equal, and when the natives are of the description above stated, the regular forces are certainly at a very great disadvantage, until, by bitter experience in the field, they are taught to fight in the same irregular way as their foes, and this lesson may be learnt at a great cost. I therefore think that when regular forces enter into a campaign under these conditions, the former ought to avoid any unnecessary haste, for time does not press with them, while every day increases the burden on a country without resources and unaccustomed to discipline, and as the forces of the country, unprovided with artillery, never ought to be able to attack fortified posts, any advance should be made by the establishment of such posts. All engagements in the field ought, if possible, to be avoided, except by corps raised from people

the service sooner than fill them, and, when they did take them, to pass their period of exile away from the charms of Pall Mall in a state of inaction that verged on suspended animation. In a passage already quoted, he refers to the deadly sleep of his military friends, and then he goes on to say in a sentence, which cannot be too much taken to heart by those who have to support this mighty empire, with enemies on every hand—"We are in a perfect Fools' Paradise about our power. We have plenty of power if we would pay attention to our work, but the fault is, to my mind, the military power of the country is eaten up by selfishness and idleness, and we are trading on the reputation of our forefathers. When one sees by the newspapers the Emperor of Germany sitting, old as he is, for two long hours inspecting his troops, and officers here grudging two hours a week for their duties, one has reason to fear the future."

During his stay at Mauritius he wrote three papers of first-rate importance. One of them on Egyptian affairs after the deposition of Ismail may be left for the next chapter, and the two others, one on coaling stations in the Indian Ocean, and the second on the comparative merits of the Cape and Mediterranean routes come within the scope of this chapter, and are, moreover, deserving of special consideration. With regard to the former of these two important subjects, Gordon wrote as follows, but I cannot discover that anything has been done to give practical effect to his recommendations :—

"I spoke to you concerning Borneo and the necessity for coaling stations in the Eastern seas. Taking Mauritius with its large French population, the Cape with its conflicting elements, and Hongkong, Singapore, and Penang with their vast Chinese populations, who may be with or against us, but who are at any time a nuisance, I would select such places where no temptation would induce colonists to come, and I would use them as maritime fortresses. For instance, the only good coaling place between Suez and Adelaide would be in the Chagos group, which contain a beautiful harbour at San Diego. My object is to secure this for the strengthening of our maritime power. These islands are of great strategical importance *vis à vis* with India, Suez, and Singapore. Remember Aden has no harbour to speak of, and has the need of a garrison, while Chagos could be kept by a company of soldiers. It is wonderful our people do not take the views of our forefathers. They took up their positions at all the salient points of the routes. We can certainly hold these places, but from the colonial feelings they have almost ceased to be our own. By establishing these coaling stations no diplomatic complications could arise, while by their means we could unite all our colonies with us, for we could give them effective support. The spirit of no colony would bear up for long against the cutting off of its trade, which would happen if we kept watching the Mediterranean and neglected the great ocean routes. The cost would not be more than these places cost now, if the principle of heavily-armed, light-draught, swift gunboats with suitable arsenals, properly (not over) defended, were followed."

Europeans, 399,000 natives are made miserable, and an expenditure of £210,000 is incurred by the Colony with the probability of periodical troubles.

"9. However disagreeable it might be, the Commission of Investigation should inquire into the antecedents of each magistrate, and also his capabilities.

"10. With respect to Basutoland, it is understood that no revenue from that country is to go to the Colony, therefore it can be no object to Colony to insist on the installation of magistrates in that country. If the magistrates of Transkei are the cause of discontent among the natives, then what object is there in insisting on their installation in Basutoland? The Pondos, a far inferior people, are happy under their own chiefs—far happier than the natives of Transkei. Why should the Colony insist on sending men who are more likely to goad the Basutos into rebellion than anything else? The administration of Basutoland is on a scale costing £30,000 per annum.

"11. It is argued that should the Colony go to war with Masupha the other chiefs would hold aloof. This is quite erroneous. A war with Masupha means a war with the Basuto nation, with a rising in the Transkei, and perhaps in Pondoland, and would affect Natal and Her Majesty's Government.

"12. The only remedy is the sending up of his Excellency the Governor, or of some high neutral officer, to Basutoland, and the calling together of the people to decide on their future government and connection with Colony. Or, should the British Government refuse this small concession, which could not involve it, then the Colony should send up an independent Commission to meet the Basuto people, and arrange a *modus vivendi*. Whichever course is followed it is a *sine quid non* that the present officials in Basutoland should be relieved at once, as they have lost the confidence both of Europeans and natives. The Basutos desire peace, and it is an error to describe their demeanour as aggressive. It is not unnatural that after what they have suffered from the hands of Colonial Government they should desire at least as nearly as much self-government as the Pondos enjoy. Certainly the present magisterial administration of the Transkei is very far from being a blessing, or conducive to peace.

"13. Nothing can possibly be worse than the present state of affairs in native administration, and the interests of the Colony demand a vertebrate government of some sort, whoever it may be composed of, instead of the invertebrate formation that is now called a government, and which drifts into and creates its own difficulties.

C. G. GORDON.

"October 19, 1882.

"P.S.—Should Her Majesty's Government manage to arrange with Basutos in a satisfactory manner, 10,000 splendid cavalry could be counted on as allies in any contingencies in Natal, etc."

The vital part of Gordon's Cape experiences was the Basuto mission, and as it is desirable that it should not be obscured by other matters, I will only touch briefly on his work as Commandant-General, apart from that, he performed as Adviser to the Cape Government in the Basuto difficulty. The post of Commandant-General was forced upon him in the first weeks of his arrival from the Mauritius by the combined urgency of Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor, and Mr Merriman,



in abstruse and much-debated theological and topographical questions. But even in the midst of these pursuits he did not lose his quickness of military perception. After a brief inspection he at once declared that the Russian Convent commanded the whole city, and was in itself a strong fortress, capable of holding a formidable garrison, which Russia could despatch in the guise of priests without any one being the wiser. From Jerusalem, when the heat became great, he returned to Jaffa, and his interest aroused in worldly matters by the progress of events in Egypt, and the development of the Soudan danger, which he had all along seen coming, was evoked by a project that was brought under his notice for the construction across Palestine of a canal to the head of the Gulf of Akabah. In a letter to myself he thus dilates upon the scheme :—

"Here is the subject which I am interested in if it could be done. The reasons are :—

"1. We are in Egypt supporting an unpopular sovereign, whose tenure ends with departure of our troops. We offer no hope to the people of any solace by this support, and by the supporting of the Turco-Circassian Pashas, who I know by experience are *hopeless*. We neither govern nor take responsibility ; yet we support these vampires.

"2. We are getting mixed up with the question of whether the interest of £90,000,000 will be paid or not.

"3. We are mixed up with the Soudan, where we provoked the rebellion, and of the responsibility of which government we cannot rid ourselves.

"4. We are in constant and increasing hot water with the French, and we gain no benefit from it, for the Canal will remain theirs.

"On the other hand, if we get a Firman from Sultan for the Palestine Canal—

"1. We lose the sacred sites of Jordan River, Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Tiberias, Jericho, not Engedi.

"2. We swamp a notoriously unhealthy valley, where there are no missions.

"3. We cut off the pest of the country of Palestine, the Bedouins.

"4. We are free of all four objections *in re* occupation of Egypt.

"5. We gain the fertile lands of Moab and Ammon.

"6. Cyprus is 150 miles from the Mediterranean *débouché*.

"7. We get a waterway for large ships to within fifty miles of Damascus.

"8. We can never be bothered by any internal commotion, except for the twenty-five miles from Haifa to Tiberias, for the waterway of the Canal would be ten miles wide, except in Arabah Valley, where there are on both sides wastes and deserts.

"9. We get rid of unhealthiness of a narrow cut with no current, which is the case with Suez Canal now, where the mud is pestilential from ships' refuse and no current.

"10. It would isolate Palestine, render it quiet from Bedouins ; it would pave the way to its being like Belgium, under no Great Power, for religious views would be against Palestine ever being owned by a Great Power.

"11. Up the ladder of Tyre to Gaza would be 10,000 square miles ; population 130,000, quite a small country.

whether he was accompanied by his friend Captain (now Colonel) F. Brocklehurst, who was undoubtedly acting as the representative of the authorities. I believe I may say with confidence that if he did not actually see the King of the Belgians on the evening of the same day, some communication passed indirectly, which showed the object of his errand, for although his own letter communicating the event is dated 17th, from Brussels, it is a fact within my own knowledge that late in the evening of the 16th a telegram was received—"Gordon goes to the Soudan."

The first intimation of something having happened that his brother Sir Henry Gordon received, was in a hurried letter, dated 17th January, which arrived by the early post on Friday, 18th, asking him to "get his uniform ready and some patent leather boots," but adding, "I saw King Leopold to-day; he is furious." Even then Sir Henry, although he guessed his destination, did not know that his departure would be so sudden, for Gordon crossed the same night, and was kept at Knights-bridge Barracks in a sort of honourable custody by Captain Brocklehurst, so that the new scheme might not be prematurely revealed. Sir Henry, a busy man, went about his own work, having seen to his brother's commission, and it was not until his return at five o'clock that he learnt all, and that Gordon was close at hand. He at once hurried off to see him, and on meeting, Gordon, in a high state of exhilaration, exclaimed, "I am off to the Soudan." Sir Henry asked "When?" and back came the reply, "To-night!" He had got his respite.

To him at that moment it meant congenial work and the chance of carrying out the thoughts that had been surging through his mind ever since Egyptian affairs became troubled and the Mahdi's power rose on the horizon of the Soudan. The reality was to prove far different. He was to learn in his own person the weakness and falseness of his Government, and to find himself betrayed by the very persons who had only sought his assistance in the belief that by a miracle—and nothing less would have sufficed—he might relieve them from responsibilities to which they were not equal. Far better would it have been, not only for Gordon's sake, but even for the reputation of England, if he had carried out his original project on the Congo, where, on a less conspicuous scene than the Nile, he might still have fought and won the battle of humanity.

I am placed in a position to state that on the morning of the 17th, at 10 A.M., he wrote to his sister from Brussels, as follows—"Do not mention it, but there is just a chance I may have to go to Soudan for two months, and then go to Congo," and again in a second letter at two o'clock, "Just got a telegram from Wolseleysaying, 'Come back

certain supply of water could have been counted on, and still more important, the co-operation of the powerful Kabbabish tribe, the only one still hostile to the Mahdi, might have been secured. The second important error was not less fatal. When the force marched it was accompanied by 6000 camels and a large number of women. Encumbered in its movements by these useless impedimenta, the force never had any prospect of success with its active enemy. As it slowly advanced from the Nile it became with each day's march more hopelessly involved in its own difficulties, and the astute Mahdi expressly forbade any premature attack to be made upon an army which he clearly saw was marching to its doom.

On the 1st November 1883, when the Egyptians were already disheartened by the want of water, the non-arrival of reinforcements from the garrisons near the Equator, which the Governor-General had rashly promised to bring up, and the exhausting nature of their march through a difficult country, the Mahdi's forces began their attack. Concealed in the high grass, they were able to pour in a heavy fire on the conspicuous body of the Egyptians at short range without exposing themselves. But notwithstanding his heavy losses, Hicks pressed on, because he knew that his only chance of safety lay in getting out of the dense cover in which he was at such a hopeless disadvantage. But this the Mahdi would never permit, and on 4th November, when Hicks had reached a place called Shekan, he gave the order to his impatient followers to go in and finish the work they had so well begun. The Egyptian soldiers seem to have been butchered without resistance. The Europeans and the Turkish cavalry fought well for a short time, but in a few minutes they were overpowered by superior numbers. Of the whole force of 10,000 men, only a few individuals escaped by some special stroke of fortune, for nearly the whole of the 300 prisoners taken were subsequently executed. Such was the complete and appalling character of the destruction of Hicks's army, which seemed to shatter at a single blow the whole fabric of the Khedive's power in the Soudan, and rivetted the attention of Europe on that particular quarter of the Dark Continent.

The consequences of that decisive success, which became known in London three weeks after it happened, were immediate throughout the region wherein it occurred. Many Egyptian garrisons, which had been holding out in the hope of succour through the force that Hicks Pasha was bringing from Khartoum, abandoned hope after its destruction at Shekan, and thought only of coming to terms with the conqueror. Among these was the force at Dara in Darfour under the command of Slatin Pasha. That able officer had held the place

Mahdi had supplied them in religious fanaticism with a more powerful incentive than pecuniary gain, and when he showed them how easily they might triumph over their opponents, he inspired them with a confidence which has not yet lost its efficacy.

In 1884 all these inducements for the tribes of the Soudan to believe in their religious leader were in their pristine strength. He had succeeded in every thing he undertook, he had armed his countless warriors with the weapons taken from the armies he had destroyed, and he had placed at the disposal of his supporters an immense and easily-acquired spoil. The later experiences of the Mahdists were to be neither so pleasant nor so profitable, but at the end of 1883 they were at the height of their confidence and power. It was at such a moment and against such a powerful adversary that the British Government thought it right to take advantage of the devotion and gallantry of a single man, to send him alone to grapple with a difficulty which several armies had, by their own failure and destruction, rendered more grave, at the same time that they established the formidable nature of the rebellion in the Soudan as an unimpeachable fact instead of a disputable opinion. I do not think his own countrymen have yet quite appreciated the extraordinary heroism and devotion to his country which Gordon showed when he rushed off single-handed to oppose the ever-victorious Mahdi at the very zenith of his power.

In unrolling the scroll of events connected with an intricate history, it next becomes necessary to explain why Gordon voluntarily, and it may even be admitted, enthusiastically, undertook a mission that, to any man in his senses, must have seemed at the moment at which it was undertaken little short of insanity. Whatever else may be said against the Government and the military authorities who suggested his going, and availed themselves of his readiness to go, to Khartoum, I do not think there is the shadow of a justification for the allegation that they forced him to proceed on that romantic errand, although of course it is equally clear that he insisted as the condition of his going at all that he should be ordered by his Government to proceed on this mission. Beyond this vital principle, which he held to all his life in never volunteering, he was far too eager to go himself to require any real stirring-up or compulsion. It was even a secret and unexpressed grievance that he should not be called upon to hasten to the spot, which had always been in his thoughts since the time he had left it. He could think of nothing else; in the midst of other work he would turn aside to discuss the affairs of Egypt and the Soudan as paramount to every other consideration; and when a great mission, like that to the Congo, which he could have made a turning-point in

16, Tewfik dismisses suddenly Cherif, and the European Press considers he has done a bold thing, and, misjudging Cherif, praise him for having broken with the advisers who caused the ruin of Ismail. My opinion is that Tewfik feared Cherif's proposition as being likely to curtail his power as absolute ruler, and that he judged that he would by this dismissal gain *kudors* in Europe, and protect his absolute power.

"After a time Riaz is appointed in Cherif's place, and then Tewfik begins his career. He concedes this and that to European desires, but in so doing claims for his youth and inexperience exemption from any reform which would take from his absolute power. Knowing that it was the bondholders who upset his father he conciliates them; they in their turn leave him to act as he wished with regard to the internal government of the country. Riaz was so placed as to be between two influences—one, the bondholders seeking their advantages; the other, Tewfik, seeking to retain all power. Riaz of course wavers. Knowing better than Tewfik the feeling of Europe, he inclines more to the bondholders than to Tewfik, to whom, however, he is bound to give some sops, such as the Universal Military Service Bill, which the bondholders let pass without a word, and which is the root of the present troubles. After a time Tewfik finds that Riaz will give no more sops, for the simple reason he dares not. Then Tewfik finds him *de trop*, and by working up the military element endeavours to counterbalance him. The European Powers manage to keep the peace for a time, but eventually the military become too strong for even Tewfik, who had conjured them up, and taking things into their own hands upset Riaz, which Tewfik is glad of, and demand a Constitution, which Tewfik is not glad of. Cherif then returns, and it is to be hoped will get for the people what he demanded before his dismissal.

"It is against all reason to expect any straightforward dealings in any Sultan, Khedive, or Ameer; the only hope is in the people they govern, and the raising of the people should be our object.

"There is no real loyalty towards the descendants of the Sandjak of Salonica in Egypt; the people are Arabs, they are Greeks. The people care for themselves. It is reiterated over and over again that Egypt is prosperous and contented. I do not think it has altered at all, except in improving its finances for the benefit of the bondholders. The army may be paid regularly, but the lot of the fellaheen and inhabitants of the Soudan is the same oppressed lot as before. The prisons are as full of unfortunates as ever they were, the local tribunals are as corrupt, and Tewfik will always oppose their being affiliated to the mixed tribunals of Alexandria, and thus afford protection to the judges of the local tribunals, should they adjudicate justly. Tewfik is essentially one of the Ameer class. I believe he would be willing to act uprightly, if by so doing he could maintain his absolute power. He has played a difficult game, making stock of his fear of his father and of Haliu, the legitimate heir according to the Moslem, to induce the European Governments to be gentle with him, at the same time resisting all measures which would benefit his people should these measures touch his absolute power. He is liberal only in measures which do not interfere with his prerogative.

"It was inevitable that the present sort of trouble should arise. The Controllers had got the finances in good order, and were bound to look to the welfare of the people, which could only be done by the curtailment of Tewfik's power. The present arrangement of Controllers and Consul-Generals is defective. The Consul-Generals are charged with the duty of seeing that the country is quiet and the people well treated. They are responsible to their Foreign Offices. The Controllers are charged with the finances and the

welfare of the country, but to whom are they responsible? Not to Tewfik; though he pays them, he cannot remove them; yet they must get on well with him. Not to the Foreign Office, for it is repeatedly said that they are Egyptian officials, yet they have to keep on good terms with these Foreign Offices. Not to the bondholders, though they are bound, considering their power, to be on good terms with them. Not to the inhabitants of Egypt, though these latter are taught to believe that every unpopular act is done by the Controllers' advice.

"The only remedy is by the formation of a Council of Notables, having direct access to Tewfik, and independent of his or of the Ministers' goodwill, and the subjection of the Controllers to the Consul-Generals responsible to the Foreign Office—in fact, Residents at the Court. This would be no innovation, for the supervision exists now, except under the Controllers and Consul-Generals. It is simply proposed to amalgamate Controllers with Consul-Generals, and to give these latter the position of Residents. By this means the continual change of French Consul-Generals would be avoided, and the consequent ill-feeling between France and England would disappear. Should the Residents fall out, the matter would be easily settled by the Governments. As it is at present, a quadruple combat goes on; sometimes it is one Consul-General against the other Consul-General, aided by the two Controllers, or a Consul-General and one Controller against the other Consul-General and the other Controller, in all of which combats Tewfik gains and the people lose.

"One thing should certainly be done—the giving of concessions ought not to be in the power of Controllers, nor if Consul-Generals are amalgamated with Controllers as Residents should these Residents have this power. It ought to be exercised by the Council of Notables, who would look to the welfare of the people."

The progress of events in Lower Egypt during 1881 and 1882 was watched with great care, whether he was vegetating in the Mauritius or absorbed in the anxieties and labours of his South African mission. Commenting on the downfall of Arabi, he explained how the despatch of troops to the Soudan, composed of regiments tainted with a spirit of insubordination, would inevitably aggravate the situation there. Later on, in 1883, when he heard of Hicks being sent to take the command and repair the defeat of Yusuf, he wrote:—"Unless Hicks is given supreme command he is lost; it can never work putting him in a subordinate position. Hicks must be made Governor-General, otherwise he will never end things satisfactorily." At the same time, he came to the conclusion that there was only one man who could save Egypt, and that was Nubar Pasha. He wrote:—"If they do not make Nubar Pasha Prime Minister or Regent in Egypt they will have trouble, as he is the only man who can rule that country." This testimony to Nubar's capacity is the more remarkable and creditable, as in earlier days Gordon had not appreciated the merit of a statesman who has done more for Egypt than any other of his generation. But at a very early stage of the Soudan troubles Gordon convinced himself that the radical cause of these difficulties and misfortunes was not the shortcomings and

errors of any particular subordinate, but the complete want of a definite policy on the part, not of the Khedive and his advisers, but of the British Government itself. He wrote on this point to a friend (2nd September 1883), almost the day that Hicks was to march from Khartoum :—

"Her Majesty's Government, right or wrong, will not take a decided step *in re* Egypt and the Soudan; they drift, but at the same time cannot avoid the *onus* of being the real power in Egypt, with the corresponding advantage of being so. It is undoubtedly the fact that they maintain Tewfik and the Pashas in power against the will of the people; this alone is insufferable from disgusting the people, to whom also Her Majesty's Government have given no inducement to make themselves popular. Their present action is a dangerous one, for without any advantage over the Canal or to England, they keep a running sore open with France, and are acting in a way which will justify Russia to act in a similar way in Armenia, and Austria in Salonica. Further than that, Her Majesty's Government must eventually gain the odium which will fall upon them when the interest of the debt fails to be paid, which will soon be the case. Also, Her Majesty's Government cannot possibly avoid the responsibility for the state of affairs in the Soudan, where a wretched war drags on in a ruined country at a cost of half a million per annum at least. I say therefore to avoid all this, *if Her Majesty's Government will not act firmly and strongly and take the country* (which, if I were they, I would not do), let them attempt to get the Palestine Canal made, and quit Egypt to work out its own salvation. In doing so lots of anarchy will take place. This anarchy is inseparable from a peaceful solution; it is the travail in birth. Her Majesty's Government do not prevent anarchy now; therefore better leave the country, and thus avoid a responsibility which gives no advantage, and is mean and dangerous."

In a letter to myself, dated 3rd January 1884, from Brussels, he enters into some detail on matters that had been forgotten or were insufficiently appreciated, to which the reported appointment of Zebehr to proceed to the Soudan and stem the Madhi's advance lent special interest :—

"I send you a small note which you can make use of, but I beg you will not let my name appear under any circumstances. When in London I had printed a pamphlet in Arabic, with all the papers (official) concerning Zebehr Pasha and his action in pushing his son to rebel. It is in Arabic. My brother has it. It is not long, and would repay translating and publishing. It has all the history and the authentic letters found in the divan of Zebehr's son when Gessi took his stockade. It is in a cover, blue and gold. It was my address to people of Soudan—Apologia. Isaiah xix. 19, 20, 21 has a wonderful prophecy about Egypt and the saviour who will come from the frontier."

The note enclosed was published in *The Times* of 5th January, and read as follows :—

"A correspondent writes that it may seem inexplicable why the Mahdi's troops attacked Gezireh, which, as its name signifies, is an isle near Berber, but there is an old tradition that the future ruler of the Soudan will be from that isle. Zebehr Rahama knew this, but he fell on leaving his boat at this

isle, and so, though the Soudan people looked on him as a likely saviour, this omen shook their confidence in him. He was then on his way to Cairo after swearing his people to rebel (if he was retained there), under a tree at Shaka. Zebehr will most probably be taken prisoner by the Mahdi, and will then take the command of the Mahdi's forces. The peoples of the Soudan are very superstitious, and the fall of the flag by a gust of wind, on the proclamation of Tewfik at Khartoum, was looked on as an omen of the end of Mehemet Ali's dynasty. There is an old tree opposite Cook's office at Jerusalem in Toppet, belonging to an old family, and protected by Sultan's Firman, which the Arabs consider will fall when the Sultan's rule ends. It lost a large limb during the Turco-Russian war, and is now in a decayed state. There can be no doubt but that the movement will spread into Palestine, Syria, and Hedjaz. At Damascus already proclamations have been posted up, denouncing Turks and Circassians, and this was before Hicks was defeated. It is the beginning of the end of Turkey. Austria backed by Germany will go to Salonica, quieting Russia by letting her go into Armenia—England and France neutralising one another.

"If not too late, the return of the ex-Khedive Ismail to Egypt, and the union of England and France to support and control the Arab movement, appears the only chance. Ismail would soon come to terms with the Soudan, the rebellion of which countries was entirely due to the oppression of the Turks and Circassians."

These expressions of opinion about Egypt and the Soudan may be said to have culminated in the remarkable pronouncement Gordon made to Mr W. T. Stead, the brilliant editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, on 8th January 1884, which appeared in his paper on the following day. The substance of that statement is as follows:—

"So you would abandon the Soudan? But the Eastern Soudan is indispensable to Egypt. It will cost you far more to retain your hold upon Egypt proper if you abandon your hold of the Eastern Soudan to the Mahdi or to the Turk than what it would to retain your hold upon Eastern Soudan by the aid of such material as exists in the provinces. Darfour and Kordofan must be abandoned. That I admit; but the provinces lying to the east of the White Nile should be retained, and north of Sennaar. The danger to be feared is not that the Mahdi will march northward through Wady Halfa; on the contrary, it is very improbable that he will ever go so far north. The danger is altogether of a different nature. It arises from the influence which the spectacle of a conquering Mahomedan Power established close to your frontiers will exercise upon the population which you govern. In all the cities in Egypt it will be felt that what the Mahdi has done they may do; and, as he has driven out the intruder and the infidel, they may do the same. Nor is it only England that has to face this danger. The success of the Mahdi has already excited dangerous fermentation in Arabia and Syria. Placards have been posted in Damascus calling upon the population to rise and drive out the Turks. If the whole of the Eastern Soudan is surrendered to the Mahdi, the Arab tribes on both sides of the Red Sea will take fire. In self-defence the Turks are bound to do something to cope with so formidable a danger, for it is quite possible that if nothing is done the whole of the Eastern Question may be reopened by the triumph of the Mahdi. I see it is proposed to fortify Wady Halfa, and prepare there to resist the Mahdi's attack. You might as well fortify against a fever. Contagion of that kind cannot be kept out by fortifications and garrisons. But that it is real,



and that it does exist, will be denied by no one cognisant with Egypt and the East. In self-defence the policy of evacuation cannot possibly be justified.

"There is another aspect of the question. You have 6000 men in Khartoum. What are you going to do with them? You have garrisons in Darfour, in Bahr el Gazelle, and Gondokoro. Are they to be sacrificed? Their only offence is their loyalty to their Sovereign. For their fidelity you are going to abandon them to their fate. You say they are to retire upon Wady Halfa. But Gondokoro is 1500 miles from Khartoum, and Khartoum is only 350 from Wady Halfa. How will you move your 6000 men from Khartoum—to say nothing of other places—and all the Europeans in that city through the desert to Wady Halfa? Where are you going to get the camels to take them away? Will the Mahdi supply them? If they are to escape with their lives, the garrison will not be allowed to leave with a coat on their backs. They will be plundered to the skin, and even then their lives may not be spared. Whatever you may decide about evacuation, you cannot evacuate, because your army cannot be moved. You must either surrender absolutely to the Mahdi or defend Khartoum at all hazards. The latter is the only course which ought to be entertained. There is no serious difficulty about it. The Mahdi's forces will fall to pieces of themselves; but if in a moment of panic orders are issued for the abandonment of the whole of the Eastern Soudan, a blow will be struck against the security of Egypt and the peace of the East, which may have fatal consequences.

"The great evil is not at Khartoum, but at Cairo. It is the weakness of Cairo which produces disaster in the Soudan. It is because Hicks was not adequately supported at the first, but was thrust forward upon an impossible enterprise by the men who had refused him supplies when a decisive blow might have been struck, that the Western Soudan has been sacrificed. The Eastern Soudan may, however, be saved if there is a firm hand placed at the helm in Egypt. Everything depends on that.

"What then, you ask, should be done? I reply, Place Nubar in power! Nubar is the one supremely able man among Egyptian Ministers. He is proof against foreign intrigue, and he thoroughly understands the situation. Place him in power; support him through thick and thin; give him a free hand; and let it be distinctly understood that no intrigues, either on the part of Tewfik or any of Nubar's rivals, will be allowed for a moment to interfere with the execution of his plans. You are sure to find that the energetic support of Nubar will, sooner or later, bring you into collision with the Khedive; but if that Sovereign really desires, as he says, the welfare of his country, it will be necessary for you to protect Nubar's Administration from any direct or indirect interference on his part. Nubar can be depended upon: that I can guarantee. He will not take office without knowing that he is to have his own way; but if he takes office, it is the best security that you can have for the restoration of order to the country. Especially is this the case with the Soudan. Nubar should be left untrammelled by any stipulations concerning the evacuation of Khartoum. There is no hurry. The garrisons can hold their own at present. Let them continue to hold on until disunion and tribal jealousies have worked their natural results in the camp of the Mahdi. Nubar should be free to deal with the Soudan in his own way. How he will deal with the Soudan, of course, I cannot profess to say; but I should imagine that he would appoint a Governor-General at Khartoum, with full powers, and furnish him with two millions sterling—a large sum, no doubt, but a sum which had much better be spent now than wasted in a vain attempt to avert the consequences of an ill-timed surrender. Sir Samuel Baker, who possesses the essential energy and single tongue requisite for the

office, might be appointed Governor-General of the Soudan, and he might take his brother as Commander-in-Chief.

"It should be proclaimed in the hearing of all the Soudanese, and engraved on tablets of brass, that a permanent Constitution was granted to the Soudanese, by which no Turk or Circassian would ever be allowed to enter the province to plunder its inhabitants in order to fill his own pockets, and that no immediate emancipation of slaves would be attempted. Immediate emancipation was denounced in 1833 as confiscation in England, and it is no less confiscation in the Soudan to-day. Whatever is done in that direction should be done gradually, and by a process of registration. Mixed tribunals might be established, if Nubar thought fit, in which European judges would co-operate with the natives in the administration of justice. Police inspectors also might be appointed, and adequate measures taken to root out the abuses which prevail in the prisons.

"With regard to Darfour, I should think that Nubar would probably send back the family and the heir of the Sultan of Darfour. If subsidized by the Government, and sent back with Sir Samuel Baker, he would not have much difficulty in regaining possession of the kingdom of Darfour, which was formerly one of the best governed of African countries. As regards Abyssinia, the old warning should not be lost sight of—"Put not your trust in princes"; and place no reliance upon the King of Abyssinia, at least outside his own country. Zeylah and Bogos might be ceded to him with advantage, and the free right of entry by the port of Massowah might be added; but it would be a mistake to give him possession of Massowah, which he would ruin. A Commission might also be sent down with advantage to examine the state of things in Harrar, opposite Aden, and see what iniquities are going on there, as also at Berbera and Zeylah. By these means, and by the adoption of a steady, consistent policy at headquarters, it would be possible—not to say easy—to re-establish the authority of the Khedive between the Red Sea and Sennaar.

"As to the cost of the Soudan, it is a mistake to suppose that it will necessarily be a charge on the Egyptian Exchequer. It will cost two millions to relieve the garrisons and to quell the revolt; but that expenditure must be incurred any way; and in all probability, if the garrisons are handed over to be massacred and the country evacuated, the ultimate expenditure would exceed that sum. At first, until the country is pacified, the Soudan will need a subsidy of £200,000 a year from Egypt. That, however, would be temporary. During the last years of my administration the Soudan involved no charge upon the Egyptian Exchequer. The bad provinces were balanced against the good, and an equilibrium was established. The Soudan will never be a source of revenue to Egypt, but it need not be a source of expense. That deficits have arisen, and that the present disaster has occurred, is entirely attributable to a single cause, and that is, the grossest misgovernment.

"The cause of the rising in the Soudan is the cause of all popular risings against Turkish rule, wherever they have occurred. No one who has been in a Turkish province, and has witnessed the results of the Bashi-Bazouk system, which excited so much indignation some time ago in Bulgaria, will need to be told why the people of the Soudan have risen in revolt against the Khedive. The Turks, the Circassians, and the Bashi-Bazouks have plundered and oppressed the people in the Soudan, as they plundered and oppressed them in the Balkan peninsula. Oppression begets discontent; discontent necessitated an increase of the armed force at the disposal of the authorities; this increase of the army force involved an increase of expenditure, which again was attempted to be met by increasing

can be confidently asserted that, although they were drawn after him *sed pede claudo* to expend millions of treasure and thousands of lives, they were never inspired by his exhortations and example to form a definite policy as to the main point in the situation, viz., the defence of the Egyptian possessions. In the flush of the moment, carried along by an irresistible inclination to do the things which he saw could be done, he overlooked all the other points of the case, and especially that he was dealing with politicians tied by their party principles, and thinking more of the passage through the House of some domestic measure of fifth-rate importance than of the maintenance of an Imperial interest and the arrest of an outbreak of Mahomedan fanaticism which, if not checked, might call for a crusade. Gordon overlooked all these considerations. He never thought but that he was dealing with other Englishmen equally mindful with himself of their country's fame.

If Gordon, long before he took up the task, had been engrossed in the development of the Soudan difficulty and the Mahdi's power, those who had studied the question and knew his special qualifications for the task, had, at a very early stage of the trouble, called upon the Government to avail themselves of his services, and there is no doubt that if that advice had been promptly taken instead of slowly, reluctantly, and only when matters were desperate, there is no doubt, I repeat, remembering what he did later on, that Gordon would have been able, without a single English regiment, to have strangled the Mahdi's power in its infancy, and to have won back the Soudan for the Khedive.

But it may be said, where was it ever prominently suggested that General Gordon should be despatched to the Soudan at a time before the Mahdi had become supreme in that region, as he undoubtedly did by the overthrow of Hicks and his force?

I reply by the following quotations from prominent articles written by myself in *The Times* of January and February 1883. Until the capture of El Obeid at that period the movement of the Mahdi was a local affair of the importance of which no one, at a distance, could attempt to judge, but that signal success made it the immediate concern of those responsible in Egypt. On 9th January 1883, in an article in *The Times* on "The Soudan," occurs this passage :—

"It is a misfortune, in the interests of Egypt, of civilisation, and of the mass of the Soudanese, that we cannot send General Gordon back to the region of the Upper Nile to complete there the good work he began eight years ago. With full powers, and with the assurance that the good fruits of his labours shall not be lost by the subsequent acts of corrupt Pashas, there need be little doubt of his attaining rapid success, while the memory of his achievements, when working for a half-hearted

capacity, Sir Evelyn Baring, now Lord Cromer, threw cold water on the project, and stated on 2nd December that "the Egyptian Government were very much averse to employing him." Subsequent events make it desirable to call special attention to the fact that when, however tardily, the British Government did propose the employment of General Gordon, the suggestion was rejected, not on public grounds, but on private. Major Baring did not need to be informed as to the work Gordon had done in the Soudan, and as to the incomparable manner in which it had been performed. No one knew better than he that, with the single exception of Sir Samuel Baker, who was far too prudent to take up a thankless task, and to remove the mountain of blunders others had committed, there was no man living who had the smallest pretension to say that he could cope with the Soudan difficulty, save Charles Gordon. Yet, when his name is suggested, he treats the matter as one that cannot be entertained. There is not a word as to the obvious propriety of suggesting Gordon's name, but the objection of a puppet-prince like Tewfik is reported as fatal to the course. Yet six weeks, with the mighty lever of an aroused public opinion, sufficed to make him withdraw the opposition he advanced to the appointment, not on public grounds, which was simply impossible, but, I fear, from private feelings, for he had not forgotten the scene in Cairo in 1878, when he attempted to control the action of Gordon on the financial question. There would be no necessity to refer to this matter, but for its consequences. Had Sir Evelyn Baring done his duty, and given the only honest answer on 2nd December 1883, that if any one man could save the situation, that man was Charles Gordon, Gordon could have reached Khartoum early in January instead of late in February, and that difference of six weeks might well have sufficed to completely alter the course of subsequent events, and certainly to save Gordon's life, seeing that, after all, the Nile Expedition was only a few days too late. The delay was also attended with fatal results to the civil population of Khartoum. Had Gordon reached there early in January he could have saved them all, for as it was he sent down 2600 refugees, *i.e.* merchants, old men, women, and children, making all arrangements for their comfort in the very brief period of open communication after his arrival, when the greater part of February had been spent.

The conviction that Gordon's appointment and departure were retarded by personal *animus* and an old difference is certainly strengthened by all that follows. Sir Evelyn Baring and the Egyptian Government would not have Charles Gordon, but they were quite content to entrust the part of Saviour of the Soudan to Zebehr, the king of the slave-hunters. On 13th December Lord Granville curtly

11th January that Gordon is not the man he wants. If there had been no other considerations in the matter, I have no doubt that Sir Evelyn Baring would have beaten public opinion, and carried matters in the high, dictatorial spirit he had shown since the first mention of Gordon's name. But he had not made allowance for an embarrassed and purposeless Government, asking only to be relieved of the whole trouble, and willing to adopt any suggestion—even to resign its place to “the unspeakable Turk”—so long as it was no longer worried in the matter.

At that moment Gordon appears on the scene, ready and anxious to undertake single-handed a task for which others prescribe armies and millions of money. Public opinion greets him as the man for the occasion, and certainly he is the man to suit “that” Government. The only obstruction is Sir Evelyn Baring. Against any other array of forces his views would have prevailed, but even for him these are too strong.

On 15th January Gordon saw Lord Wolseley, as described in the last chapter, and then and there it is discovered and arranged that he will go to the Soudan, but only at the Government's request, provided the King of the Belgians will consent to his postponing the fulfilment of his promise, as Gordon knows he cannot help but do, for it was given on the express stipulation that the claim of his own country should always come first. King Leopold, who has behaved throughout with generosity, and the most kind consideration towards Gordon, is naturally displeased and upset, but he feels that he cannot restrain Gordon or insist on the letter of his bond. The Congo Mission is therefore broken off or suspended, as described in the last chapter. In the evening of the 15th Lord Granville despatched a telegram to Sir Evelyn Baring, no longer asking his opinion or advice, but stating that the Government have determined to send General Gordon to the Soudan, and that he will start without delay. To that telegram the British representative could make no demur short of resigning his post, but at last the grudging admission was wrung from him that “Gordon would be the best man.” This conclusion, to which anyone conversant with the facts, as Sir Evelyn Baring was, would have come at once, was therefore only arrived at seven weeks after Sir Charles Dilke first brought forward Gordon's name as the right person to deal with the Soudan difficulty. That loss of time was irreparable, and in the end proved fatal to Gordon himself.

In describing the last mission, betrayal, and death of Gordon, the heavy responsibility of assigning the just blame to those individuals who were in a special degree the cause of that hero's fate cannot be shirked

strange, if the British Government were resolved to stand firm to its evacuation policy, that it should have allowed its emissary to accept the title of Governor-General of a province which it had decided should cease to exist.

This was not the only nor even the most important consequence of his turning aside to go to Cairo. When there, those who were interested for various reasons in the proposal to send Zebehr to the Soudan, made a last effort to carry their project by arranging an interview between that person and Gordon, in the hope that all matters in dispute between them might be discussed, and, if possible, settled. Gordon, whose enmity to his worst foe was never deep, and whose temperament would have made him delight in a discussion with the arch-fiend, said at once that he had no objection to meeting Zebehr, and would discuss any matter with him or any one else. The penalty of this magnanimity was that he was led to depart from the uncompromising but safe attitude of opposition and hostility he had up to this observed towards Zebehr, and to record opinions that were inconsistent with those he had expressed on the same subject only a few weeks and even days before. But even in what follows I believe it is safe to discern his extraordinary perspicuity; for when he saw that the Government would not send Zebehr to Cyprus, he promptly concluded that it would be far safer to take or have him with him in the Soudan, where he could personally watch and control his movements, than to allow him to remain at Cairo, guiding hostile plots with his money and influence in the very region whither Gordon was proceeding.

This view is supported by the following Memorandum, drawn up by General Gordon on 25th January 1884, the day before the interview, and entitled by him "Zebehr Pasha v. General Gordon":—

"Zebehr Pasha's first connection with me began in 1877, when I was named Governor-General of Soudan. Zebehr was then at Cairo, being in litigation with Ismail Pasha Eyoub, my predecessor in Soudan. Zebehr had left his son Suleiman in charge of his forces in the Bahr Gazelle. Darfour was in complete rebellion, and I called on Suleiman to aid the Egyptian army in May 1877. He never moved. In June 1877 I went to Darfour, and was engaged with the rebels when Suleiman moved up his men, some 6000, to Dara. It was in August 1877. He and his men assumed an hostile attitude to the Government of Dara. I came down to Dara and went out to Suleiman's camp, and asked them to come and see me at Dara. Suleiman and his chiefs did so, and I told them I felt sure that they meditated rebellion, but if they rebelled they would perish. I offered them certain conditions, appointing certain chiefs to be governors of certain districts, but refusing to let Suleiman be Governor of Bahr Gazelle. After some days' parleying, some of Suleiman's chiefs came over to my side, and these chiefs warned me that, if I did not take care, Suleiman would attack me. I therefore ordered Suleiman to go to Shaka, and ordered those chiefs

It is highly probable, from the air of confidence with which Zebehr called for the production of the letter, that, either during the Arabi rising or in some other way, he had recovered possession of the original; but Gordon had had all the documents copied in 1879, and bound in the little volume mentioned in the preceding Memorandum, as well as in several of his letters, and the evidence as to Zebehr's complicity and guilt seems quite conclusive.

In his Memorandum Gordon makes two conditions: first, "if Zebehr bears no malice personally against me, I will take him to the Soudan at once," and this condition is given further force later on in reference to "the mystic feeling." The second condition was that Zebehr was only to be sent if the Government desired a settled state of affairs after the evacuation. From the beginning of the interview it was clear to those present that no good would come of it, as Zebehr could scarcely control his feelings, and showed what they deemed a personal resentment towards Gordon that at any moment might have found expression in acts. After a brief discussion it was decided to adjourn the meeting, on the pretence of having search made for the incriminating document, but really to avert a worse scene. General Graham, in the after-discussion on Gordon's renewed desire to take Zebehr with him, declared that it would be dangerous to acquiesce; and Colonel Watson plainly stated that it would mean the death of one or both of them. Gordon, indifferent to all considerations of personal danger, did not take the same view of Zebehr's attitude towards him personally, and would still have taken him with him, if only on the ground that he would be less dangerous in the Soudan than at Cairo; but the authorities would not acquiesce in a proposition that they considered would inevitably entail the murder of Gordon at an early stage of the journey. They cannot, from any point of view, be greatly blamed in this matter; and when Gordon complains later on, as he frequently did complain, about the matter, the decision must be with his friends at Cairo, for they strictly conformed with the first condition specified in his own Memorandum. At the same time, he was perfectly correct in his views as to Zebehr's power and capacity for mischief, and it was certainly very unfortunate and wrong that his earlier suggestion of removing him to Cyprus or some other place of safety was not adopted.

The following new correspondence will at least suggest a doubt whether Gordon was not more correct in his view of Zebehr's attitude towards himself than his friends. What they deemed strong resentment and a bitter personal feeling towards Gordon on the part of Zebehr, he considered merely the passing excitement from discussing a matter of

"My children and all my family join themselves to me, and pay you their best respects.

"Further, I beg to inform you that the messenger who had been previously sent through me, carrying Government correspondence to your brother, Gordon Pasha, has reached him, and remitted the letter he had in his own hands, and without the interference of any other person. The details of his history are mentioned in the enclosed report, which I hope you will kindly read.—Believe me, honourable Lady, to remain yours most faithfully,  
ZEBEHR RAHAMAH."

REPORT ENCLOSED.

"When I came to Cairo and resided in it as I was before, I kept myself aside of all political questions connected with the Soudan or others, according to the orders given me by the Government to that effect. But as a great rumour was spread over by the high Government officials who arrived from the Soudan, and were with H.E. General Gordon Pasha at Khartoum before and after it fell, that all my properties in that country had been looted, and my relations ill-treated, I have been bound, by a hearty feeling of compassion, to ask the above said officials what they knew about it, and whether the messenger sent by me with the despatches addressed by the Government to General Gordon Pasha had reached Khartoum and remitted what he had.

"These officials informed me verbally that on the 25th Ramadan 1301 (March 1884), at the time they were sitting at Khartoum with General Gordon, my messenger, named Fadhalla Kabileblos, arrived there, and remitted to the General in his proper hands, and without the interference of anyone, all the despatches he had on him. After that the General expressed his greatest content for the receipt of the correspondence, and immediately gave orders to the artillery to fire twenty-five guns, in sign of rejoicing, and in order to show to the enemy his satisfaction for the news of the arrival of British troops. General Gordon then treated my messenger cordially, and requested the Government to pay him a sum of £500 on his return to Cairo, as a gratuity for all the dangers he had run in accomplishing his faithful mission. Besides that, the General gave him, when he embarked with Colonel Stewart, £13 to meet his expenses on the journey. A few days after the arrival of my messenger at Khartoum, H.E. General Gordon thought it proper to appoint Colonel Stewart for coming to Cairo on board a man-of-war with a secret mission, and several letters, written by the General in English and Arabic, were put in two envelopes, one addressed to the British and the other to the Egyptian Government, and were handed over to my messenger, with the order to return to Cairo with Colonel Stewart on board a special steamer.

"But when Khartoum fell, and the rebels got into it, making all the inhabitants prisoners, the Government officials above referred to were informed that my messenger had been arrested, and all the correspondence that he had on him, addressed by General Gordon to the Government, was seized; for when the steamer on board of which they were arrived at Abou Kamar she went on rocks, and having been broken, the rebels made a massacre of all those who were on board; and as, on seeing the letters carried by my messenger, they found amongst them a private letter addressed to me by H.E. Gordon Pasha, expressing his thanks for my faithfulness to him, the rebels declared me an infidel, and decided to seize all my goods



## CHAPTER XII.

### KHARTOUM.

BEFORE entering on the events of this crowning passage in the career of this hero, I think the reader might well consider on its threshold the exact nature of the adventure undertaken by Gordon as if it were a sort of everyday experience and duty. At the commencement of the year 1884 the military triumph of the Mahdi was as complete as it could be throughout the Soudan. Khartoum was still held by a force of between 4000 and 6000 men. Although not known, all the other garrisons in the Nile Valley, except Kassala and Sennaar, both near the Abyssinian frontier, had capitulated, and the force at Khartoum would certainly have offered no resistance if the Mahdi had advanced immediately after the defeat of Hicks. Even if he had reached Khartoum before the arrival of Gordon, it is scarcely doubtful that the place would have fallen without fighting. Colonel de Coetlogon was in command, but the troops had no faith in him, and he had no confidence in them. That officer, on 9th January, "telegraphed to the Khedive, strongly urging an immediate withdrawal from Khartoum. He said that one-third of the garrison are unreliable, and that even if it were twice as strong as it is, it would not hold Khartoum against the whole country." In several subsequent telegrams Colonel de Coetlogon importuned the Cairo authorities to send him authority to leave with the garrison, and on the very day that the Government finally decided to despatch Gordon he telegraphed that there was only just enough time left to escape to Berber. While the commandant held and expressed these views, it is not surprising that the garrison and inhabitants were disheartened and decidedly unfit to make any resolute opposition to a confident and daring foe. There is excellent independent testimony as to the state of public feeling in the town.

Mr Frank Power had been residing in Khartoum as correspondent of *The Times* from August 1883, and in December, after the Hicks catastrophe, he was appointed Acting British Consul. In a letter written on 12th January he said: "They have done nothing for us yet from Cairo. They are leaving it all to fate, and the rebels around us

were more or less supported by Sir Evelyn Baring, who at last suggested in an important despatch, dated 28th February, that the British Government should withdraw altogether from the matter, and "give full liberty of action to General Gordon and the Khedive's Government to do what seems best to them."

Well would it have been for Gordon and everyone whose reputation was concerned if this step had been taken, for the Egyptian Government, the Khedive, his ministers Nubar and Cherif, were opposed to all surrender, and desired to hold on to Khartoum and the Souakim-Berber route. But without the courage and resolution to discharge it, the Government saw the obligation that lay on them to provide for the security and good government of Egypt, and that if they shirked responsibility in the Soudan, the independence of Egypt might be accomplished by its own effort and success. They perceived the objections to giving Egypt a free hand, but they none the less abstained from taking the other course of definite and decisive action on their own initiative. As Gordon quickly saw and tersely expressed: "You will not let Egypt keep the Soudan, you will not take it yourself, and you will not permit any other country to occupy it."

As if to give emphasis to General Gordon's successive requests—Zebehr, 200 men to Wady Halfa, opening of route from Souakim to Berber, presence of English officers at Dongola, and of Indian cavalry at Berber—telegraphic communication with Khartoum was interrupted early in March, less than a fortnight after Gordon's arrival in the town. There was consequently no possible excuse for anyone ignoring the dangerous position in which General Gordon was placed. He had gone to face incalculable dangers, but now the success of Osman Digma and the rising of the riparian tribes threatened him with that complete isolation which no one had quite expected at so early a stage after his arrival. It ought, and one would have expected it, to have produced an instantaneous effect, to have braced the Government to the task of deciding what its policy should be when challenged by its own representative to declare it. Gordon himself soon realised his own position, for he wrote: "I shall be caught in Khartoum; and even if I was mean enough to escape I have not the power to do so." After a month's interruption he succeeded in getting the following message, dated 8th April, through, which is significant as showing that he had abandoned all hope of being supported by his own Government:—

"I have telegraphed to Sir Samuel Baker to make an appeal to British and American millionaires to give me £300,000 to engage 3000 Turkish troops from the Sultan and send them here. This would settle the Soudan and Mahdi for ever. For my part, I think

rescue held out to him by the Government at the eleventh hour, when success was hardly attainable.

For the sake of clearness it will be well to give here a brief summary of the siege during the six months that followed the arrival of General Gordon and the departure of Colonel Stewart on 10th September. The full and detailed narrative is contained in Colonel Stewart's Journal, which was captured on board his steamer. This interesting diary was taken to the Mahdi at Omdurman, and is said to be carefully preserved in the Treasury. The statement rests on no very sure foundation, but if true the work may yet thrill the audience of the English-speaking world. But even without its aid the main facts of the siege of Khartoum, down at all events to the 14th December, when Gordon's own diary stops, are sufficiently well known for all the purposes of history.

At a very early stage of the siege General Gordon determined to try the metal of his troops, and the experiment succeeded to such a perfect extent that there was never any necessity to repeat it. On 16th March, when only irregular levies and detached bodies of tribesmen were in the vicinity of Khartoum, he sent out a force of nearly 1000 men, chiefly Bashi-Bazouks, but also some regulars, with a field-piece and supported by two steamers. The force started at eight in the morning, under the command of Colonel Stewart, and landed at Halfiyeh, some miles down the stream on the right bank of the Nile. Here the rebels had established a sort of fortified position, which it was desirable to destroy, if it could be done without too much loss. The troops were accordingly drawn up for the attack, and the gun and infantry fire commenced to cover the advance. At this moment about sixty rebel horsemen came out from behind the stockade and charged the Bashi-Bazouks, who fired one volley and fled. The horsemen then charged the infantry drawn up in square, which they broke, and the retreat to the river began at a run. Discouraging as this was for a force of all arms to retire before a few horsemen one-twentieth its number, the disaster was rendered worse and more disheartening by the conduct of the men, who absolutely refused to fight, marching along with shouldered arms without firing a shot, while the horsemen picked off all who straggled from the column. The gun, a considerable quantity of ammunition, and about sixty men represented the loss of Gordon's force; the rebels are not supposed to have lost a single man. "Nothing could be more dismal than seeing these horsemen, and some men even on camels, pursuing close to troops who with shouldered arms plodded their way back." Thus wrote Gordon of the men to whom he had to trust for a successful defence of Khartoum.

are made up of almost daily interchanges of artillery fire from the town, and of rifle fire in reply from the Arab lines. That this was not merely child's play may be gathered from two of Gordon's protected ships showing nearly a thousand bullet-marks apiece. Whenever the rebels attempted to force their way through the lines they were repulsed by the mines; and the steamers not only inflicted loss on their fighting men, but often succeeded in picking up useful supplies of food and grain. No further reverses were reported, because Gordon was most careful to avoid all risk, and the only misfortunes occurred in Gordon's rear, when first Berber, through the treachery of the Greek Cuzzi, and then Shendy passed into the hands of the Mahdists, thus, as Gordon said, "completely hemming him in." In April a detached force up the Blue Nile went over to the Mahdi, taking with them a small steamer, but this loss was of no great importance, as the men were of what Gordon called "the Arabi hen or hero type," and the steamer could not force its way past Khartoum and its powerful flotilla. In the four months from 16th March to 30th July Gordon stated that the total loss of the garrison was only thirty killed and fifty or sixty wounded, while half a million cartridges had been fired against the enemy. The conduct of both the people and garrison had been excellent, and this was the more creditable, because Gordon was obliged from the very beginning, owing to the capture of the bullion sent him at Berber, to make all payments in paper money bearing his signature and seal. During that period the total reinforcement to the garrison numbered seven men, including Gordon himself, while over 2600 persons had been sent out of it in safety as far as Berber.

The reader will be interested in the following extracts from a letter written by Colonel Duncan, R.A., M.P., showing the remarkable way in which General Gordon organised the despatch of these refugees from Khartoum. The letter is dated 29th November 1886, and addressed to Miss Gordon:—

"When your brother, on reaching Khartoum, found that he could commence sending refugees to Egypt, I was sent on the 3rd March 1884 to Assouan and Korosko to receive those whom he sent down. As an instance of your brother's thoughtfulness, I may mention that he requested that, if possible, some motherly European woman might also be sent, as many of the refugees whom he had to send had never been out of the Soudan before, and might feel strange on reaching Egypt. A German, Giegler Pasha, who had been in Khartoum with your brother before, and who had a German wife, was accordingly placed at my disposal, and I stationed them at Korosko, where almost all the refugees arrived. I may mention that I saw and spoke to every one of the

possible, to retake Berber, or, failing that, to escort the *Abbas* past the point of greatest danger; the second, to convey the most recent news about Khartoum affairs to Lower Egypt; and the third was to lend a helping hand to any force that might be coming up the Nile or across the desert from the Red Sea. Five days after its departure Gordon knew through a spy that Stewart's flotilla had passed Shendy in safety, and had captured a valuable Arab convoy. It was not till November that the truth was known how the ships bombarded Berber, and passed that place not only in safety, but after causing the rebels much loss and greater alarm, and then how Stewart and his European companions went on in the small steamer *Abbas* to bear the tale of the wonderful defence of Khartoum to the outer world—a defence which, wonderful as it was, really only reached the stage of the miraculous after they had gone and had no further part in it. So far as Gordon's military skill and prevision could arrange for their safety, he did so, and with success. When the warships had to return he gave them the best advice against treachery or ambuscade:—"Do not anchor near the bank, do not collect wood at isolated spots, trust nobody." What more could Gordon say? If they had paid strict heed to his advice, there would have been no catastrophe at Dar Djumna. These reflections invest with much force Gordon's own view of the matter:—"If *Abbas* was captured by treachery, then I am not to blame; neither am I to blame if she struck a rock, for she drew under two feet of water; if they were attacked and overpowered, then I am to blame." So perfect were his arrangements that only treachery, aided by Stewart's overconfidence, baffled them.

With regard to the wisdom of the course pursued in thus sending away all his European colleagues—the Austrian consul Hensall alone refusing to quit Gordon and his place of duty—opinions will differ to the end of time, but one is almost inclined to say that they could not have been of much service to Gordon once their uppermost thought became to quit Khartoum. The whole story is told very graphically in a passage of Gordon's own diary:—

"I determined to send the *Abbas* down with an Arab captain. Herbin asked to be allowed to go. I jumped at his offer. Then Stewart said he would go if I would exonerate him from deserting me. I said, 'You do not desert me. I cannot go; but if you go you do great service.' I then wrote him an official; he wanted me to write him an order. I said 'No; for, though I fear not responsibility, I will not put you in any danger in which I am not myself.' I wrote them a letter couched thus:—'*Abbas* is going down; you say you are willing to go in her if I think you can do so in honour. You can go in honour, for

reason why Gordon asked, in the first place, for the despatch of a small British force to at least Wady Halfa. It is possible that one of the chief reasons for the Government rejecting all these suggestions, and also, it must be remembered, doing nothing in their place towards the relief and support of their representative, may have been the hope that this treatment would have led him to resign and throw up his mission. They would then have been able to declare that, as the task was beyond the powers of General Gordon, they were only coming to the prudent and logical conclusion in saying that nothing could be done, and that the garrisons had better come to terms with the Mahdi. Unfortunately for those who favoured the evasion of trouble as the easiest and best way out of the difficulty, Gordon had high notions as to what duty required. No difficulty had terrors for him, and while left at the post of power and responsibility he would endeavour to show himself equal to the charge.

Yet there can be no doubt that those who sent him would have rejoiced if he had formally asked to be relieved of the task he had accepted, and Mr Gladstone stated on the 3rd April that "Gordon was under no orders and no restraint to stay at Khartoum." A significant answer to the fact represented in that statement was supplied, when, ten days later, silence fell on Khartoum, and remained unbroken for more than five months. But at the very moment that the Prime Minister made that statement as to Gordon's liberty of movement, the Government knew of the candid views which he had expressed as to the proper policy for the Soudan. It should have been apparent that, unless they and their author were promptly repudiated, and unless the latter was stripped of his official authority, the Government would, however tardily and reluctantly, be drawn after its representative into a policy of intervention in the Soudan, which it, above everything else, wished to avoid. Gordon concealed nothing. He told them "time," "reinforcements," and a very considerable expenditure was necessary to honourably carry out their policy of evacuation. They were not prepared to concede any of these save the last, and even the money they sent him was lost because they would send it by Berber instead of Kassala. But they knew that "the order and restraint" which kept Gordon at Khartoum was the duty he had contracted towards them when he accepted his mission, and which was binding on a man of his principles until they chose to relieve him of the task. The fear of public opinion had more to do with their abstaining from the step of ordering his recall than the hope that his splendid energy and administrative power might yet provide some satisfactory issue from the dilemma, for at

Government to timely action it is unnecessary to speak—is due to the Duke of Devonshire, the second may reasonably be claimed by Lord Wolseley. This recognition is the more called for here, because the most careful consideration of the facts has led me to the conclusion, which I would gladly avoid the necessity of expressing if it were possible, that Lord Wolseley was responsible for the failure of the relief expedition. This stage of responsibility has not yet been reached, and it must be duly set forth that on 24th July Lord Wolseley, then Adjutant-General, wrote a noble letter, stating that, as he “did not wish to share the responsibility of leaving Charley Gordon to his fate,” he recommended “immediate action,” and “the despatch of a small brigade of between three and four thousand British soldiers to Dongola, so that they might reach that place about 15th October.” But even that date was later than it ought to have been, especially when the necessity of getting the English troops back as early in the New Year as possible was considered, and in the subsequent recriminations that ensued, the blame for being late from the start was sought to be thrown on the badness of the Nile flood that year. General Gordon himself cruelly disposed of that theory or excuse when he wrote, “It was not a bad Nile; quite an average one. You were too late, that was all.” Still, Lord Wolseley must not be robbed of the credit of having said on 24th July that an expedition was necessary to save Gordon, “his old friend and Crimean comrade,” towards whom Wolseley himself had contracted a special moral obligation for his prominent share in inducing him to accept the very mission that had already proved so full of peril. In short, if the plain truth must be told, Lord Wolseley was far more responsible for the despatch of General Gordon to Khartoum than Mr Gladstone.

The result of the early representations of the Duke of Devonshire, and the definite suggestion of Lord Wolseley, was that the Government gave in when the public anxiety became so great at the continued silence of Khartoum, and acquiesced in the despatch of an expedition to relieve General Gordon. Having once made the concession, it must be allowed that they showed no niggard spirit in sanctioning the expedition and the proposals of the military authorities. The sum of ten millions was devoted to the work of rescuing Gordon by the very persons who had rejected his demands for the hundredth part of that total. Ten thousand men selected from the *élite* of the British army were assigned to the task for which he had begged two hundred men in vain. It is impossible here to enter closely into the causes which led to the expansion of the three or four thousand British infantry into a special corps of ten thousand fighting men, picked from the crack regiments of the army, and composed of every arm of the service compelled to fight under unaccustomed

three months from the date of the message informing him of the expedition would suffice for the conveyance of the troops as far as Berber or Metemmah, and at that rate General Earle would have arrived where his steamers awaited him early in November. Gordon's views as to the object of the expedition, which somebody called the Gordon Relief Expedition, were thus clearly expressed :—

"I altogether decline the imputation that the projected expedition has come to relieve me. It has come to save our National honour in extricating the garrisons, etc., from a position in which our action in Egypt has placed these garrisons. I was Relief Expedition No. 1 ; they are Relief Expedition No. 2. As for myself, I could make good my retreat at any moment, if I wished. Now realise what would happen if this first relief expedition was to bolt, and the steamers fell into the hands of the Mahdi. This second relief expedition (for the honour of England engaged in extricating garrisons) would be somewhat hampered. We, the first and second expeditions, are equally engaged for the honour of England. This is fair logic. I came up to extricate the garrison, and failed. Earle comes up to extricate garrisons, and I hope succeeds. Earle does not come to extricate me. The extrication of the garrisons was supposed to affect our "National honour." If Earle succeeds, the "National honour" thanks him, and I hope recommends him, but it is altogether independent of me, who, for failing, incurs its blame. I am not *the rescued lamb*, and I will not be."

Lord Wolseley, still possessed with the idea that, now that an expedition had been sanctioned, the question of time was not of supreme importance, and that the relieving expedition might be carried out in a deliberate manner, which would be both more effective and less exposed to risk, did not reach Cairo till September, and had only arrived at Wady Halfa on 8th October, when his final instructions reached him in the following form :—"The primary object of your expedition is to bring away General Gordon and Colonel Stewart, and you are not to advance further south than necessary to attain that object, and when it has been secured, no further offensive operations of any kind are to be undertaken." These instructions were simple and clear enough. The Government had not discovered a policy. It had, however, determined to leave the garrisons to their fate, despite the National honour being involved, at the very moment that it sanctioned an enormous expenditure to try and save the lives of its long-neglected representatives, Gordon and Colonel Stewart. With extraordinary shrewdness, Gordon detected the hollowness of its purpose, and wrote :—"I very much doubt what is really going to be the policy of our Government, even now that the Expedition is at Dongola," and if they intend ratting out, "the troops had better not come beyond Berber till the question of what will be done is settled."

The receipt of Gordon's and Power's despatches of July showed



that there were, at the time of their being written, supplies for four months, which would have carried the garrison on till the end of November. As the greater part of that period had expired when these documents reached Lord Wolseley's hands, it was quite impossible to doubt that time had become the most important factor of all in the situation. The chance of being too late would even then have presented itself to a prudent commander, and, above all, to a friend hastening to the rescue of a friend. The news that Colonel Stewart and some other Europeans had been entrapped and murdered near Merowe, which reached the English commander from different sources before Gordon confirmed it in his letters, was also calculated to stimulate, by showing that Gordon was alone, and had single-handed to conduct the defence of a populous city. Hard on the heels of that intelligence came Gordon's letter of 4th November to Lord Wolseley, who received it at Dongola on 14th of the same month. The letter was a long one, but only two passages need be quoted:—"At Metemmah, waiting your orders, are five steamers with nine guns." Did it not occur to anyone how greatly, at the worst stage of the siege, Gordon had thus weakened himself to assist the relieving expedition? Even for that reason there was not a day or an hour to be lost.

But the letter contained a worse and more alarming passage:—"We can hold out forty days with ease; after that it will be difficult." Forty days would have meant till 14th December, one month ahead of the day Lord Wolseley received the news, but the message was really more alarming than the form in which it was published, for there is no doubt that the word "difficult" is the official rendering of Gordon's, a little indistinctly written, word "desperate." In face of that alarming message, which only stated facts that ought to have been surmised, if not known, it was no longer possible to pursue the leisurely promenade up the Nile, which was timed so as to bring the whole force to Khartoum in the first week of March. Rescue by the most prominent general and swell troops of England at Easter would hardly gratify the commandant and garrison starved into surrender the previous Christmas, and that was the exact relationship between Wolseley's plans and Gordon's necessities.

The date at which Gordon's supplies would be exhausted varied not from any miscalculation, but because on two successive occasions he discovered large stores of grain and biscuits, which had been stolen from the public granaries before his arrival. The supplies that would all have disappeared in November were thus eked out, first till the middle of December, and then finally till the end of January, but there is no doubt that they would not have lasted as long as they did if in the last

month of the siege he had not given the civil population permission to leave the doomed town. From any and from every point of view, there was not the shadow of an excuse for a moment's delay after the receipt of that letter on 14th November.

With the British Exchequer at a commander's back, it is easy to organise an expedition on an elaborate scale, and to carry it out with the nicety of perfection, but for the realisation of these ponderous plans there is one thing more necessary, and that is time. I have no doubt if Gordon's letter had said "granaries full, can hold out till Easter," that Lord Wolseley's deliberate march—Cairo, September 27; Wady Halfa, October 8; Dongola, November 14; Korti, December 30; Metemmah any day in February, and Khartoum, March 3, and those were the approximate dates of his grand plan of campaign—would have been fully successful, and held up for admiration as a model of skill. Unfortunately, it would not do for the occasion, as Gordon was on the verge of starvation and in desperate straits when the rescuing force reached Dongola. It is not easy to alter the plan of any campaign, nor to adapt a heavy moving machine to the work suitable for a light one. To feed 10,000 British soldiers on the middle Nile was alone a feat of organisation such as no other country could have attempted, but the effort was exhausting, and left no reserve energy to despatch that quick-moving battalion which could have reached Gordon's steamers early in December, and would have reinforced the Khartoum garrison, just as Havelock and Outram did the Lucknow Residency.

Dongola is only 100 miles below Debbeh, where the intelligence officers and a small force were on that 14th November; Ambukol, specially recommended by Gordon as the best starting-point, is less than fifty miles, and Korti, the point selected by Lord Wolseley, is exactly that distance above Debbeh. The Bayuda desert route by the Jakdul Wells to Metemmah is 170 miles. At Metemmah were the five steamers with nine guns to convoy the desperately needed succour to Khartoum. The energy expended on the despatch of 10,000 men up 150 miles of river, if concentrated on 1000 men, must have given a speedier result, but, as the affair was managed, the last day of the year 1884 was reached before there was even that small force ready to make a dash across the desert for Metemmah.

The excuses made for this, as the result proved, fatal delay of taking six weeks to do what—the forward movement from Dongola to Korti, not of the main force, but of 1000 men—ought to have been done in one week, were the dearth of camels, the imperfect drill of the camel corps, and, it must be added, the exaggerated fear of the Mahdi's power. When it was attempted to quicken the slow forward

movement of the unwieldy force confusion ensued, and no greater progress was effected than if things had been left undisturbed. The erratic policy in procuring camels caused them at the critical moment to be not forthcoming in anything approaching the required numbers, and this difficulty was undoubtedly increased by the treachery of Mahmoud Khalifa, who was the chief contractor we employed. Even when the camels were procured, they had to be broken in for regular work, and the men accustomed to the strange drill and mode of locomotion. The last reason perhaps had the most weight of all, for although the Mahdi with all his hordes had been kept at bay by Gordon single-handed, Lord Wolseley would risk nothing in the field. Probably the determining reason for that decision was that the success of a small force would have revealed how absolutely unnecessary his large and costly expedition was. Yet events were to show beyond possibility of contravention that this was the case, for not less than two-thirds of the force were never in any shape or form actively employed, and, as far as the fate of Gordon went, might just as well have been left at home. They had, however, to be fed and provided for at the end of a line of communication of over 1200 miles.

Still, notwithstanding all these delays and disadvantages, a well-equipped force of 1600 men was ready on 30th December to leave Korti to cross the 170 miles of the Bayuda desert. That route was well known and well watered. There were wells at, at least, five places, and the best of these was at Jakdul, about half-way across. The officer entrusted with the command was Major-General Sir Herbert Stewart, an officer of a gallant disposition, who was above all others impressed with the necessity of making an immediate advance, with the view of throwing some help into Khartoum. Unfortunately he was trammelled by his instructions, which were to this effect—he was to establish a fort at Jakdul; but if he found an insufficiency of water there he was at liberty to press on to Metemmah. His action was to be determined by the measure of his own necessities, not of Gordon's, and so Lord Wolseley arranged throughout. He reached that place with his 1100 fighting men, but on examining the wells and finding them full, he felt bound to obey the orders of his commander, viz. to establish the fort, and then return to Korti for a reinforcement. It was a case when Nelson's blind eye might have been called into requisition, but even the most gallant officers are not Nelsons.

The first advance of General Stewart to Jakdul, reached on 3rd January 1885, was in every respect a success. It was achieved without loss, unopposed, and was quite of the nature of a surprise. The British relieving force was at last, after many months' report, proved to be a

think that Sir Charles Wilson, who only came on the scene at the last moment, should be made the scapegoat for the mistakes of others in the earlier stages of the expedition, and I hold now, as strongly as when I wrote the words, the opinion that, "in the face of what he did, any suggestion that he might have done more would seem both ungenerous and untrue." Still the fact remains that on 21st January there was left a sufficient margin of time to avert what actually occurred at daybreak on the 26th, for the theory that the Madhi could have entered the town one hour before he did was never a serious argument, while the evidence of Slatin Pasha strengthens the view that Gordon was at the last moment only overcome by the Khalifa's resorting to a surprise. On one point of fact Sir Charles Wilson seems also to have been in error. He fixes the fall of Omdurman at 6th January, whereas Slatin, whose information on the point ought to be unimpeachable, states that it did not occur until the 15th of that month.

When Sir Herbert Stewart had fought and won the battle of Abou Klea, it was his intention on reaching the Nile, as he expected to do the next day, to put Sir Charles Wilson on board one of Gordon's own steamers and send him off at once to Khartoum. The second battle and Sir Herbert Stewart's fatal wound destroyed that project. But this plan might have been adhered to so far as the altered circumstances would allow. Sir Charles Wilson had succeeded to the command, and many matters affecting the position of the force had to be settled before he was free to devote himself to the main object of the dash forward, viz. the establishment of communications with Gordon and Khartoum. As the consequence of that change in his own position, it would have been natural that he should have delegated the task to someone else, and in Lord Charles Beresford, as brave a sailor as ever led a cutting-out party, there was the very man for the occasion. Unfortunately, Sir Charles Wilson did not take this step for, as I believe, the sole reason that he was the bearer of an important official letter to General Gordon, which he did not think could be entrusted to any other hands. But for that circumstance it is permissible to say that one steamer—there was more than enough wood on the other three steamers to fit one out for the journey to Khartoum—would have sailed on the morning of the 22nd, the day after the force sheered off from Metemmah, and, at the latest, it would have reached Khartoum on Sunday, the 25th, just in time to avert the catastrophe.

But as it was done, the whole of the 22nd and 23rd were taken up in preparing two steamers for the voyage, and in collecting scarlet coats for the troops, so that the effect of real British soldiers coming up the Nile might be made more considerable. At 8 A.M. on Satur-

day, the 24th, Sir Charles Wilson at last sailed with the two steamers, *Bordeen* and *Talataween*, and it was then quite impossible for the steamers to cover the ninety-five miles to Khartoum in time. Moreover, the Nile had, by this time, sunk to such a point of shallowness that navigation was specially slow and even dangerous. The Shabluka cataract was passed at 3 P.M. on the afternoon of Sunday; then the *Bordeen* ran on a rock, and was not got clear till 9 P.M. on the fatal 26th. On the 27th, Halfiyeh, eight miles from Khartoum, was reached, and the Arabs along the banks shouted out that Gordon was killed and Khartoum had fallen. Still Sir Charles Wilson went on past Tuti Island, until he made sure that Khartoum had fallen and was in the hands of the dervishes. Then he ordered full steam down stream under as hot a fire as he ever wished to experience, Gordon's black gunners working like demons at their guns. On the 29th the *Talataween* ran on a rock and sank, its crew being taken on board the *Bordeen*. Two days later the *Bordeen* shared the same fate, but the whole party was finally saved on the 4th February by a third steamer, brought up by Lord Charles Beresford. But these matters, and the subsequent progress of the Expedition which had so ignominiously failed, have no interest for the reader of Gordon's life. It failed to accomplish the object which alone justified its being sent, and, it must be allowed, that it accepted its failure in a very tame and spiritless manner. Even at the moment of the British troops turning their backs on the goal which they had not won, the fate of Gordon himself was unknown, although there could be no doubt as to the main fact that the protracted siege of Khartoum had terminated in its capture by the cruel and savage foe, whom it, or rather Gordon, had so long defied.

I have referred to the official letter addressed to General Gordon, of which Sir Charles Wilson was the bearer. That letter has never been published, and it is perhaps well for its authors that it has not been, for, however softened down its language was by Lord Wolseley's intercession, it was an order to General Gordon to resign the command at Khartoum, and to leave that place without a moment's delay. Had it been delivered and obeyed (as it might have been, because Gordon's strength would probably have collapsed at the sight of English soldiers after his long incarceration), the next official step would have been to censure him for having remained at Khartoum against orders. Thus would the primary, and, indeed, sole object of the Expedition have been attained without regard for the national honour, and without the discovery of that policy, the want of which was the only cause of the calamities associated with the Soudan.

After the 14th of December there is no trustworthy, or at least,

There then comes the second phase of the question—the alleged abandonment of General Gordon by the Government which enlisted his services in face of an extraordinary, and indeed unexampled danger and difficulty. The evidence, while it proves conclusively and beyond dispute that Mr Gladstone's Government never had a policy with regard to the Soudan, and that even Gordon's heroism, inspiration, and success failed to induce them to throw aside their lethargy and take the course that, however much it may be postponed, is inevitable, does not justify the charge that it abandoned Gordon to his fate. It rejected the simplest and most sensible of his propositions, and by rejecting them incurred an immense expenditure of British treasure and an incalculable amount of bloodshed; but when the personal danger to its envoy became acute, it did not abandon him, but sanctioned the cost of the expedition pronounced necessary to effect his rescue. This decision, too late as it was to assist in the formation of a new administration for the Soudan, or to bring back the garrisons, was taken in ample time to ensure the personal safety and rescue of General Gordon. In the literal sense of the charge, history will therefore acquit Mr Gladstone and his colleagues of the abandonment of General Gordon personally.

With regard to the third phase of the question—viz. the failure of the attempt to rescue General Gordon, which was essentially a military, and not a political question—the responsibility passes from the Prime Minister to the military authorities who decided the scope of the campaign, and the commander who carried it out. In this case, the individual responsible was the same. Lord Wolseley not only had his own way in the route to be followed by the expedition, and the size and importance attached to it, but he was also entrusted with its personal direction. There is consequently no question of the sub-division of the responsibility for its failure, just as there could have been none of the credit for its success. Lord Wolseley decided that the route should be the long one by the Nile Valley, not the short one from Souakim to Berber. Lord Wolseley decreed that there should be no Indian troops, and that the force, instead of being an ordinary one, should be a picked special corps from the *élite* of the British army; and finally Lord Wolseley insisted that there should be no dash to the rescue of Gordon by a small part of his force, but a slow, impressive, and overpoweringly scientific advance of the whole body. The extremity of Gordon's distress necessitated a slight modification of his plan, when, with qualified instructions, which practically tied his hands, Sir Herbert Stewart made his first appearance at Jakdul.

It was then known to Lord Wolseley that Gordon was in ex-